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**TOWARDS AN INCULTURATED AFRICAN COMMUNAL
MODEL OF ECCLESIA: Clergy-Laity Collaborative
Ministry in Igboland of Southern Nigeria**

par

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**Faculté de théologie et de sciences des religions
Thèse présentée à la Faculté des études supérieures
en vue de l'obtention du grade de
Philosophiae Doctor (Ph.D.)
en théologie**

Juillet 2007

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UNIVERSITÉ DE MONTRÉAL

Faculté des études supérieures et postdoctorales

Cette thèse intitulée :

TOWARDS AN INCULTURATED AFRICAN COMMUNAL MODEL OF
ECCLESIA : Clergy-Laity Collaborative
Ministry in Igboland of Southern Nigeria

Par

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RESUMÉ

Le projet de cette thèse a pour point de départ le problème de la faible collaboration prévalant entre les agents d'évangélisation (clergé et laïcs) chez le peuple Igbo du Nigeria, ce qui ne manque pas de soulever la question de l'exercice du pouvoir et de l'autorité au sein de la communauté chrétienne. Ce manque de collaboration ou d'un véritable esprit de dialogue affecte négativement l'engagement croyant ainsi que la participation active des laïcs catholiques dans les activités de leur église. Par ailleurs, nous remarquons qu'aujourd'hui, chez les Igbo, grand nombre de communautés chrétiennes – diocèses, paroisses, communautés religieuses, familles, etc., sont encore imprégnées d'une conception ecclésiologique pré-conciliaire marquée par la caractère autoritaire de la hiérarchie. En pratique, il s'agit d'un type d'église éloigné de la vie et des véritables préoccupations du peuple. Il faut probablement en chercher les racines dans la teneur de la première entreprise missionnaire d'évangélisation, qui a tenté de supprimer la culture africaine et qui, de pair avec le pouvoir autoritaire de l'administration coloniale, a implanté le syndrome de la supposée «supériorité de la culture européenne». Cette suprématie s'est imposée à tous les niveaux, et même jusque dans les maisons de formation des séminaristes.

Pour traiter de ce problème de la collaboration, nous avons choisi d'utiliser une méthode praxéologique comprenant quatre «moments»: l'observation (description, analyse), l'interprétation, l'intervention et la prospective. Ainsi, en première partie de la thèse, un premier chapitre présente la dynamique des structures ecclésiales internes à trois niveaux: macro (diocèses), méso (paroisses) et micro (formation dans les séminaires). En complément, le second chapitre présente une revue de littérature sur cette collaboration lacunaire.

Pour l'étape de l'interprétation, nous avons eu recours à plusieurs disciplines pour réfléchir au problème analysé sous les angles d'un manque d'inculturation, d'une formation défailante dans les séminaires et d'un faible engagement de foi. Ont été ainsi mises à contribution diverses théories actuelles sur la collaboration, le dialogue et l'inculturation, l'anthropologie, à propos du mode de vie et de la vision religieuse africaine antérieures à l'arrivée du christianisme, la missiologie (modalités et ecclésiologie de la première

évangélisation) et la théologie touchant les relations entre le clergé et le laïcat (perspective biblique, référence aux Conciles de Trente et de Vatican II et aux documents du Magistère, pensée d'un théologien Igbo).

Ainsi éclairés, et dans la foulée tant des messages pastoraux de Jean-Paul II aux Africains que du Synode de l'Église africaine (1994), nous nous sommes rendus compte que cette dernière avait un besoin urgent d'une reconstruction, d'un renouveau si elle voulait rester fidèle au message évangélique. En ce sens, nous avons proposé une nouvelle ecclésiologie, une église communale *umunna* comme réponse spécifiquement Igbo à la perspective de l'Église comme Famille-de-Dieu mise de l'avant par les Pères du Synode africain, au lieu d'une église cléricalisée refoulant la plupart des fidèles à la marge du peuple de Dieu. Cette ecclésiologie se fonde sur le mystère trinitaire, à cette profondeur où l'Esprit constitue le lien de la communion. De plus, il s'enracine dans le système africain de parenté ou de famille étendue, appelé *Umunna* (esprit de communalisme). Ce modèle a paru faire preuve d'un avantage culturel marqué sur d'autres modèles d'église plus anciens ou contemporains.

À l'étape de l'intervention visant une implantation du nouveau modèle d'église, nous avons proposé des éléments d'une pédagogie plus pertinente pour la formation dans les séminaires, des pistes concernant le rôle des agents d'évangélisation (évêque, pasteurs et laïcs), ainsi que des perspectives pour des pratiques plus adéquates de l'inculturation dans la liturgie et la catéchèse, de manière à assurer une collaboration plus effective et à encourager l'engagement de foi au sein du peuple. Il est important que le nouveau modèle d'église coïncide mieux avec la culture des Igbo du Nigeria en particulier, et des Africains en général.

Pour le dernier volet de notre méthode, la prospective, celle-ci n'a pas fait l'objet d'une partie spécifique, mais a été intégrée dans la conclusion générale en mettant en relief des propositions et en faisant une projection sur la nouvelle manière d'être église impliquée par les interventions souhaitées. Le dynamisme au sein des diocèses, des paroisses et des séminaires sera renforcé par un nouveau travail de collaboration par équipe et dans lequel les leaders auront à se considérer comme au service de l'ensemble des fidèles. Dans cette perspective, les futurs pasteurs devront recevoir une formation qui les mette en contact étroit avec leur culture, qui leur fasse apprécier celle-ci, et qui les mette au défi d'être créatifs dans leur adaptation aux contextes concrets où ils auront à travailler en collaboration avec les laïcs à une mission commune.

SUMMARY

The project of this dissertation is based on poor collaborative ministry that exists among the agents of evangelization (clergy and laity respectively) in Igboland of Nigeria that puts a question mark on the exercise of power and authority in the Catholic Christian communities. This lack of effective collaboration or the spirit of dialogue has affected adversely the people's faith-commitment and the active participation of the Catholic laity in the Church's activities. Hence, we notice that, today in Igboland, many of the Catholic Christian communities: dioceses, parishes, religious congregations of men and women, natural families, etc., are still living in the Pre-Vatican II conception of ecclesiology where those on top lord it over the rest. In practice, what is experienced is a type of Church that is alienated from the true life of the people due to, perhaps, the nature of the early missionary evangelization that suppressed African culture and planted "European Superior Culture" syndrome, capitalizing on the use of authoritarian power of administration and supremacy at all levels, even in our houses of seminary formation.

Thus, to handle this problem of collaboration, we used a praxiological method that involved: observation (description, analysis), interpretation, intervention and prospective. Following this method, we handled the observation under two main chapters. The first chapter, based on our own inquiry, treated the dynamic internal structures under three perspectives: diocese, parish, and seminary formation. The second chapter was consecrated to the presentation of substantial literature texts on the same issue of poor collaboration, as a complement to the observation done in the first chapter.

On the aspect of interpretation, we resorted to various disciplines for our reflection on the analysed problem of collaboration that concerned with poor inculturation, poor method of seminary formation and poor faith-commitment. We made use of current theories on collaboration, dialogue and inculturation, as well as of anthropological (religious worldview of the Africans before Christianity), missiological, (how and under what ecclesiology the early missionaries planted the faith) and theological perspectives (embracing biblical insight, references to the early Christian collaboration before and after the clergy-laity division, to the Councils of Trent and Vatican II, Magisterial documents

and to the blending voice of an Igbo theologian) on clergy-laity relation. With these insights, we discovered, not only through our observation but also, through Pope John Paul II pastoral addresses to Africans and in the light of African Synod of 1994, that African Church needed a reconstruction, an ecclesiastical renewal, in order to be faithful to the Gospel message. Following this trend of thought, we proposed a new ecclesia model for the Igbos, *umunna* communal ecclesia as a specific Igbo response to the perspective of Church-as-family of God put forward by the African Synod Fathers, instead of the clericalized type that put many of the faithful at the periphery among the people of the God. This proposed ecclesiology of Church as a family of God has its origin in the Blessed Trinity at the depths of which the Holy Spirit is the bond of communion. Moreover, at the cultural level, this model of ecclesiology has its root in the Igbo extended family system of *umunna*, (the spirit of communalism). Consequently, it seems to have a cultural advantage over other contemporary and historical models of Church.

At the third step, that of intervention in view of the new proposed ecclesia, we presented a more relevant pedagogy of education, the pertinent roles of agents of evangelization (local bishop, parish pastor and the laity) and suggestible application of inculturation in the liturgical and catechetical aspects of evangelization that would help to ensure effective collaboration and encouragement of faith-commitment among the people. It is important that the new model of ecclesia fits well with the cultural life of the Igbo people of Nigeria in particular and Africans in general.

Prospective, the last aspect of our praxiological method, was not treated as a specific entity, but integrated within the general conclusion as it contained more of the suggestive relevant proposals for a new way of being a Church in the Igbo context. The dynamism within the diocese, the parish and the seminary community would be strengthened through new organized collaborative work as a team and where the leaders see their work as service to the rest of the faithful. Following the fundamental cause of the problem, the students on seminary formation must be trained to appreciate their culture as they would be exposed to the available inculturated material values of the culture and challenged to be creative by making their own adaptations to the concrete contexts where they would be working in collaboration with the laity later in mission.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND THEIR FULL MEANINGS

ADCU	Awka District Catholic Union
AAS	Acta Apostolicasae Sedis
AMECEA	Association of Members of Episcopal Conference of East Africa
AECAWA	Association of Episcopal Conference of Anglophone, West Africa
CATHAN	Catholic Theological Association of Nigeria
CF	Confer
CMA	Christian Mothers Association
CSSp	Congregation of the Saint Spirit (Spiritan)
CWO	Catholic Women Organization
CIWA	Catholic Institute of West Africa
COCU	Church of Christ Uniting
DH	Dignitatis Humanae
EATWOT	Ecumenical Association of the Third World Theologians
ENCC	Eastern Nigerian Catholic Council
EIA	Ecclesia in Africa
Ed/Eds	Editor/Editors
GS	Gaudium et Spes
ID	Idem (same author)
Ibid	Ibidem (same place)
ITC	International Theological Commission
KSM	Knight of Saint Mulumbus
LG	Lumen Gentium
NLC	National Laity Council of Nigeria
Op. cit	Opus Citus (work already cited)
PO	Presbyterorum Ordinis
RCM	Roman Catholic Mission

SECAN	Symposium of Episcopal Conference of Africa and Madagascar
SAC	The Society of African Culture
UPE	Universal Primary Education
USLA	University of California Los Angeles
WCC	World Council of Churches

DEDICATED TO

MY BELOVED LATE MOTHER,

CHRISTIANA NGWAHU IKPE ONWUNATA

(OF THE BLESSED MEMORY)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

For the completion of this work and for the life and good health, I must first thank my God, my creator, for His infinite love and care.

I owe a special word of thanks to my congregation Holy Ghost Fathers, especially, my home Province of Nigeria, for the opportunity, encouragement and support, given to me. In a special way, I have the pleasure to thank my former Provincials: Frs. Michael Obi Onwuemeli, CSSp., Leo Okeke, CSSp., and the present one, Augustine Onyeneke, CSSp., for their moral support. This is where I thank most especially my mentor, Bishop V.V. Ezeonyia, CSSp, for his paternal help and moral support. I remain grateful to you, Rev. Dr. Ekwunife, CSSp for helping to proofread this work at its initial stage.

I am grateful to the University of Montreal, particularly the Dean, Professor Jean Duhaime, and the former Vice-Dean, Professor Denise Couture, who gave me the initial encouragement and moral support when I arrived in Montreal from Europe. This is where I remember also my special academic advisers: Professor Jean-François Roussel, Emeritus Professor Michel Campbell and Professor Solange Lefebvre who gave me the structural orientation of the Faculty of Theology on the use of “Praxiological Method” and the importance of “Doctoral Seminars”. Generally, I remain grateful to the entire formidable professorial staff for their academic encouragement and moral formation. My sincere gratitude also goes to the “*bourse d’exonération des droits de scolarité différentiels*” which I got at the initial stage of my studies that helped in alleviating the financial constraint for this study.

I must acknowledge with deep gratitude the relentless effort of my moderator, Professor Michel Beaudin and the co-moderator Professor Jean-Marc Gauthier who, not only moderated this dissertation, but also provided the relevant materials and continued to encourage me till the final stage of this work. I owe a lot of my prayers for you, Michel

Beaudin for the sleepless nights of proofreading, especially towards the final end of this work. I really enjoyed your cooperation and understanding.

My entire family: Engr. Gabriel Onwunata, Dr. Maurice and Ihuoma Ngwaba, Dr. Agatha U. Onwunle and others, who persistently supported and encouraged me all along, with deep love and sincere regards, I am grateful to you all. I am especially indebted to you, Dr. Michael, Ihedinma Joy Ngadi and the entire family for being so special to me, particularly throughout the period of this academic pursuit. I thank you for the accommodation and care which, in no small measure, facilitated the accomplishment of this work. May God bless, reward and keep you all in good health. I will not forget you, (*Ndi umunna na umunne dum*), *Otu Ndi Igbo* community and members of the Nigerian-Canadian Association, for your relentless encouragement and moral support.

I would love to express my deep appreciation to the professors and students in the different Major Seminaries I visited in Nigeria like Seat of Wisdom, Owerri, Spiritan School of Philosophy, Isienue Nsukka, Spiritan Institute of Theology, Attakwu Enugu and Memorial Bigard Seminary, Enugu, Anambra State, for their availability and willingness in discussing and responding sincerely to my questions that helped in shaping this work. I also extend my appreciation to some of the African/Nigerian priests studying/or working in Europe, Canada and United States, who shared their seminary formation experiences with me. I have to extend my regards to the parish pastors, catechists and lay workers in different parishes in Nigeria and abroad whose insights and shared experiences helped a lot, particularly in the observation part of this work.

Finally, I should not forget to express my deep appreciation to these ladies and gentle men who contributed both in moral encouragement and in active practical ways toward the successful production of this work: Mazi Peter Nwafor, Marie-Linda and her mother, Samia Boghdady, Dr. Pamela Chrabieh, James and Juliana Abu, Lily Dziarmaga, Suzanne Malavasic, and the pastoral team workers of St. Thomas-à-Becket Parish, Pierrefonds, Quebec, Canada. To you all, I say thanks and God bless.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1. Subject of the thesis

The fundamental problem that this dissertation is meant to address is focused on poor pastoral collaborative ministry that exists among the agents of evangelization (clergy and laity) in Igboland of Nigeria. Lack of effective collaboration among the agents of evangelization or the lack of the spirit of love through dialogue has in one-way or the other, adversely affected the people's faith-commitment and the active participation of many of the members, particularly the laity, in the running of the Church. By participation, I do not mean the vast number of Churchgoers, but rather the faithfully committed members, who coordinate their life-styles to include practical activities of faith and profession in their religious and societal aspects. This situation questions the exercise of power and authority in Igbo Catholic communities. It is unfortunate that until today, communities in Igboland are still living in Pre-Vatican II perception of ecclesiology where those on top lord it over the rest.

The main background issue is that early missionaries took little or no recognition of the important cultural features of the Igbo traditional religion as the Church was strongly influenced by a model of "Western cultural bias" that was imposed on the converts. The consequence is that in practice, what is experienced is a type of ecclesia that is alienated from the true life of the people. By its nature, the Church became very individualistic and somehow exploitative with less regard for the feelings and dignity of the persons when it comes to authority, duty assignment and employment purposes. The fact is that "European Superior Culture" syndrome that capitalizes on the use of authoritarian hierarchical power and supremacy at all levels, including seminaries in Igboland, still remains a problem. This type of situation challenges today's nature of mission that demands collective and effective collaboration of all the agents of evangelization with consideration of the people's cultural life.

The sad situation is that in Igboland, “the Catholic Church has always been seen as the property of the clergy, Father’s Church” as it is called *Uka Fada*. This expression could be interpreted to mean that “all others, religious and laity, are merely seen and treated as tenants in Father’s Church”¹ and not as effective collaborators who can handle Church functions with their God given talents. Some lay workers in the domestic staff within some parishes are most often treated with little or no respect by many clergy, regardless of their age or length of service. One may ask, why all these problems? Whatsoever might have been responsible for this, the persisting underpinning cause in our consideration of the problems is the poor spirit of collaboration and the poor relationship borne out of the nature of ecclesiology that seems to lack respect and dignity of persons due to poor spirit of inculturation and dialogue. This nature of practice, to some extent, is contrary to the cultural way of life in Igboland where elders are respected and activities are shared and carried out communally. If we persist to allow these problems, the Church in Igboland will continue to remain foreign to the people and their faith-commitment will continue to be peripheral. Before we continue, it is pertinent to present succinctly the characteristic history and geographical location of the Igbos on the map so as to have a better understanding of the problem.

2. The Igbo people and their characteristic features

2.1 Geographical location

Nigeria has three major ethnic groups: the Yoruba of the West, the Housa-Fulani of the North and the Igbo of the South. The Igbos constitute a major tribe in Nigeria. They inhabit a geographical area on the Southern part of Nigeria. They live in multitudinous villages, fragmented into family groups of “*umunna*”. They have a comprehensive language of their own, the same customs, traditions, religious belief, socio-political and economic systems. Today, the population of the Igbos is about 20 million. They are known by their spirit of communalism. This means that they act as one voice in most situations, despite a

¹ J. Aniagwu, Collaborative Ministry. Priests, Sisters and Brothers, Nigeria-Ibadan: Graphic Graphics Press Ltd., 2001, p. 21.

few cultural differences or internal conflicts that may arise due to human weakness. The Igbo people are regarded as one of the most distinctive and dynamic Nigerian tribes. The traditional political organization is based on the democratic community of *umunna* with strong religious ties.

2.2 Religion

There are three strong and outstanding religions established in Nigeria. In the North, Islam is the majority, 40%. In the South east, which is the Igbo zone and the middle belt region, Christianity is 40%. Traditional religion is practised all over the country, primarily in the Southern and Eastern regions, and they are made up of 20%. These days, a good number of Catholics are turning to sects that offer an indigenous style of approach and they continue to grow and gain more popularity in Igboland.

The early 19th century converts of evangelization in Igboland of Nigeria were mainly the slaves, the outcasts, (called the “*Osu*”), the poor, the disabled and the marginalized within the society. These outcasts and underprivileged in the society were given a new Christian orientation of life by the missionaries. Eventually, they resorted to imbibe the European way of life and religion, thus, becoming new promotional instruments of evangelization in the hinder lands. This strategy of recruiting the “outcast, (who were regarded as the isolated group of the society), at the initial stage of evangelization, “alienated the greater number of the native people who refused to become Church members. The initial evangelization in Igboland was more like buying back slaves, creating Christian communities and giving of medical cares for the less privileged. Consequently, the Gospel message was not presented to the Igbos in such a way that they could feel an indigenous sense of belonging to the Christian faith, the numerical strength notwithstanding.

Today, there are 49 dioceses and 9 provinces in Nigeria. In Igboland, we have 13 dioceses with two Archdioceses of Onitsha and Owerri respectively. As in most western world countries, Nigeria has a freedom of worship and religion occupies a central place in the lives of the people. The growing number of Christians is encouraging if it is matched up with their faith-commitment and love. Generally, many of the Igbos are Christians, but some

of them practice the indigenous traditional religion in which they find an affinity and whose major tenets are shared by all Igbo-speaking people. In spite of the large number of converts today, “the consensus amongst most Igbos is that Igbo Christianity lacks cultural identity and deep faith-commitment. This condition makes it difficult for average Igbo person to understand the true essence of Christianity and what it means for him or her existentially”².

Discussing this issue, Fr. Celestine Obi observed that with the cursory review of African history of evangelization, there would be the need today for more intensive evangelization and it has to be the duty and obligation of all Christians and not just few. The challenges facing Christians in Igboland, according to him, has been the ability to bear clear and united witness by all; leadership by example of the millions of Catholics and the need for deep renewal of our life. He emphasized that it is very important for us, the Igbo Catholics, to begin the review our life with the narration of our common Christian history. Igboland is fertilized for the deepening of faith which demands a collaborative spirit between the clergy and the laity in the light of inculturation so as to maintain harmony between the people’s traditional religion and the new Christian faith. This should not be disassociated from their practices in life and with their extended family system.

2.3 Igbo family system

For some people, family is reduced to the nucleus group of father, mother and children, but this is not necessarily the case with the Igbo people. For an Igbo man, a family consists of all the common ancestors, wherever these may be found. An Igbo man talks of an extended family system which includes all the traceable blood relations of *umunna*. This great family is looked after by its traditional ancestor, who, though dead, is regarded as its head. Ancestral belief, as we shall see in the main text, is a general phenomenon in Africa. Aylward Shorter said that the ancestors are the creators of the society and are thought to be in a permanent relationship with the living as they play the role of intermediary between the people and the Supreme Being, God Himself. For the Igbos, ancestors form one community

² *Ibid.* p. 21.

with their living ones. They are like the saints in the Catholic Church. This is why in Igboland, villages or towns are named after their respective great ancestors. These are sure signs of ancestral influences in the lives of their family members or society. These influences help to maintain the spirit of communalism. Moreover, these family ties help to explain why the Igbos live and function communally and are buried in the same *ogbe*, together as *umunna* or in an extended family system, regardless of where they died. The belief is that a place where the dead ones are buried is the continual point of contact between them and the living. This insures family unity between the living and the dead. No wonder why the Igbos always insist on sending home the body of the dead from a foreign land to maintain the cultural tradition.

2.4 Political structures of the Igbos

From my interview discussion with Chief Gbogbo Ekwenye concerning the political structure of the Igbos, he has this to say:

The Igbos have village assembly of *umunna* which is more of a democratic government that is responsible for the handling of important political, moral, social and economic matters that affect the well-being of the people. The members are made up of *Idi-Isi-Opapa* or representative family (or clan) members of the elders who are objective, honest, just and God fearing people. The Igbos per se, do not operate on kingship dynasty where a decision is ruled by just the holder of the mantle, no. Even in some places in Anambra, like Nri, where this seems to operate, the king takes decision through consultations and never rules unilaterally. The Igbo government is everywhere participative and communal. *Igbo amaghi Eze*. This means that kingship is not in Igbo-man's blood, they don't recognize it outside the level of others. All these we hear today of *Eze*, Chief, etc., are colonial political inventions applied to enforce power on the people contrary to their culture. The Igbo assembly operates in the spirit of communalism through dialogue, consultative representation and consensus³.

The above quotation gives us the nature of the political and social life-style of the Igbos. G. Ekwenye's source shows that the "Igbo society was 'stateless' and that the Igbos had no constituted political institutions before the colonial period" as it functions today. The "relatively egalitarian Igbos" lived in an organized group of *umunna* according to a lineage system that did not allow social stratification or an administrative spirit of individualism, rather, a collaborative system of government. Pre-colonial Igbo political organization was

3 G.D. Ekwenye, "Igbo Political Structure", interview conducted at Mbutu-Ngwa, 2003.

more of a representative type of government based on participative communities devoid of kings or governing chiefs. They had no centralized chieftaincy, hereditary aristocracy, or kingship customs as can be found among their neighbours. Instead, the responsibility of leadership was traditionally left to the village Councils which included the “heads of lineages, elders, titled men, and women” as reported also by Chief J.T. Amohu. Nevertheless, few areas he pointed out could be exempted here: Onitsha town, which had kings called “*Obis*”, Nri territory and the Arochukwu, which had priests and kings or “*Ezes*”. These exceptional traditions probably arose from the influence of their neighbouring towns such as the kingdoms of *Igala* and Benin.

Reflecting on how warrant chiefs came into the life-system of the Igbos, A.C. Nwosu made us understand that the Igbos were originally free from such centralized and despotic institutions of governance⁴. Furthermore, he maintained that it was “the colonial masters who created the ‘warrant chiefs’ with the ordinance of 1916 to facilitate governance in Igboland where kingship institutions were few or to achieve uniformity with the rest of the country”⁵. When the system of warrant chief started to loose ground after the attainment of independence, “the military government in 1978 reinforced it by creating autonomous communities and decreed that each community be placed under a traditional ruler (*Eze* or *Obi* in some areas)”. The proliferation of kingship institution was thus engineered in an area of Nigeria where the predominant political organization was the “democratic village republic”, like the Igbos, in which the traditional local institution for governance has always been the community of the elders. What this means is that the Igbos have their own political system of governance quite different from that of other tribes like Hausa, Fulani, the Yoruba and the Benin Kingdom; that they are democratically oriented.

4 Cf. A.C. Nwosu, “*Indigenous administration in Rural Nigeria: A Case Study of Ubomiri Community*”, in *African Journal of Institutions and Development*, Vol. 2., No.1, 1996. Page n.a.

5 *Ibid.* Page n.a.

3. Presentation of the problem

With the above overview of the history and the life-style of the Igbos, as a matter of clarity, we shall present the problem of our thesis under the following subheadings: (1) the general problem, (2) the problem expressed in literature, and (3) our specific approach.

3.1. The general problem

Christianity is really growing in Nigeria as presented above. The Catholic Church, in 1985, celebrated her centenary history in Igboland. Within this period, majority has turned from a traditional religion to Christianity in response to the early missionary evangelization, although, many today are choosing the opposite direction. However, it was really a big sacrifice on the part of the missionaries who did everything possible to plant Christianity in Africa, particularly, in Igboland of Nigeria, in spite of distance. Actually, it may seem as an out of ungratefulness for anybody to overlook the heroic effort made by the early missionaries to establish Christianity in Igboland. We really commend them for their heroic effort under the circumstances in which they found themselves.

However, the issue we are dealing with is one of the consequences of the early evangelization. The early missionaries did not realize that it would be a problem today as it fared well during their time. As we explained above, it is the lack of a fundamental basis for the Gospel message that is missing within the cultural lives of the people. What this means is that in spite of the heroic efforts of the missionaries to plant the faith, even though it has lasted a century, it has not been deepened in the cultural live of the people. Many Igbo people are not yet at home in its structural administrative practice and in its relation to the communal spirit of collaboration. One can advance many other reasons for this, such as the arbitrary suppression of the “Igbo customs, traditions and institutions replacing them with Western ones” by the early missionaries. For instance, the communal spirit of prayer, decision making, personality respect, funeral rites, marriage rites, birth rites, ancestral veneration, polygamy, cultural festivals, etc.

The early missionary evangelization was influenced by a colonial power mentality. It was predominantly authoritarian oriented, a situation where the people's traditional culture was clamped down in preference to that of the European culture that highlighted Christianity instead. The early missionaries, in an effort to preach the new religion, suppressed the African traditional religion, which they branded as fetish and diabolic in nature. Reverend Anthony Ekwunife has this to say: "The missionaries came not to learn from the wretched, benighted Africans – Nigerians in particular, but rather to bestow the riches of Western British power on the Nigerians"⁶. Ekwunife presented the "three sources of this unlimited power" which he regarded as "power plenitude" as "the bible, the sword and the plough"⁷. This affected the Igbo culture greatly. The new religion is received within a western system of thought and authority.

With the development of the reformation in history, clericalism and an authority syndrome predominate the Church; hence, the imposition of uniformity as a defense against proliferation of thought, which no doubt, has its consequences. The situation was such that the cultural lives of the people were in question and foreign ideas prevailed instead. Western culture brought individual selfishness, social and political selfishness as opposed to the cultural life of altruism and communalism. Added to this is the fact that the nature of mission in the pre-Vatican II period was directed toward the imposition and implantation of the Latin Church with its liturgy, theology, spirituality, and Church organization into various cultural climates in the early evangelization of Africa that adversely affected the cultural lives of the Igbos.

Moreover, power and suppression were invoked just as it was at the period of colonialism that operated on a superior/inferior type of relationship. Simply put, dominance and annihilation of culture and personality were mutely or silently accepted by the recipients, who could hardly defend their positions. Suffice it to say that in Igboland of Nigeria, this problem of poor collaboration has caused tensions among the people. Most often, these tensions are not recognized by the external structures because of similar

⁶ Discussion with A. Ekwunife during interview. He also made reference to his article "*The Image of the Priest in Contemporary Africa – the Nigerian Connection*", in L.N. Mbefo & Ernest M. Ezeogu (eds.), *The Clergy in Nigeria Today* – (SIST Symposium Series No. 3), Nigeria: Snaap Press Ltd., 1992, pp. 140-174.

⁷ *Ibid.*

prevailing domination and abuse of power within the society itself. Simply put, there is a clash of cultures between the western culture and the Igbo culture. Thus, there was not much regard for the feelings of the people who were treated as barbarians. There was no substantial dialogue regarding the people's religious culture and the inherited Christianity following its early nature of propagation.

Granted that there are slight aspects of adaptation of the Gospel message to the culture of the people like the current translation of the Holy Bible from English to Igbo and mass said in the language of the people these days, but these are mere literal translations that are devoid of cultural idiomatic and symbolic gestures. This problem of poor inculturation adversely affects, not only the spirit of collaboration that should exist today among the agents of evangelization (the clergy and laity), but also, the people's faith-commitment and real human relationship that is built on true love in relationship with one another. The emphasis of the *Lumen Gentium* and *Ad Gentes* on the role of the laity working along with the hierarchy has not been seriously considered in matters of power, authority, and respect for the other, etc., in some dioceses in Igboland as testified in our research findings.

There is much that needs to be done in terms of administrative collaboration between the laity and the clergy, especially in areas of mission, as the structure and mood of running the Church have not changed much since after the early missionaries. Lay people in the Church have not been involved *per se* in active administration of the Church, as it should be. Authority and responsibility are still tightly held in the hands of the hierarchy that has been directing the pace and determining the line of action for the laity, whose positions are not stable despite the fact that their employments do not attract any insurance or many benefits for security purposes. The viability of mission today demands the type of collaboration that is "we-centered and multi-centred". This harmonizes with self security and the cultural life of the people as opposed to an "I-centred" mentality that is not associated with the spirit of dialogue and communal life, but rather anchored to the life of individualism that threatens the civilization of love and respect.

For instance, in dioceses, principals of mission schools and parish directors of religious education are responsible for recruiting and retaining teachers and moral instructors, implementing educational programs and making decisions that promote Catholic education of the students as is the case in America and Europe. Moreover, the revised code has opened most offices in the judicial section of the diocesan curia to qualify laymen and women to participate in the activities of the Church. This means that lay persons can serve as tribunal notaries, advocates, auditors, defenders of the bond and promoters of justice⁸. Official positions are open to professional lay persons in financial management, project management, school superintendents, directors of religious activities, pastoral planners, catechetical leaders, and as directors of Catholic charitable organizations, etc. However, in our context, how many dioceses in Igboland have responded favourably to these diverse views of committing the laity? The situation is not without its consequences. We may claim that we have enough ordained priests to carry out most of these activities, but in many parishes the pastors have more than enough sacramental and pastoral work to occupy them, besides dominating in all aspects of the pastoral activities thereby marginalizing the role of the laity. Moreover, we are not always experts in all the fields as enumerated above. One may then ask: can't the pastoral work be shared with others?

The consequences of this ugly situation are diverse. Many intellectual activities are indirectly suppressed and discouraged from being operative in some dioceses. Talents are suspiciously tapped, resulting in less commitment on the part of the laity in Igboland and depression on the part of some priests who are forced to be involved in activities that are quite different from their areas of specialization. Many of the laity are arbitrarily picked for employment and dropped at will without dialogue or due consideration by some of us, clergy. In some areas, "rivalry, suspicion and *power tussle* do creep in and permeate into the Church's administrative setting"⁹. Due to the problem of "excessive clericalism and institutionalism" in the hierarchy that places the role of the laity in the last strata of the administration of the Church, the latter, in some areas, tends to be passive and some resort

8 Cf. The Code of Canon Law, C. 1483, par.2, C. 1483, C. 1428, par. 2 and C. 1435, Australia Collins Liturgical Publication, 2001.

9 Discussion with G. A. Ojo and some diocesan Council leaders on the problem of collaboration between the Nigerian clergy and laity.

to an easy consent toward pastoral issues as the safest way of collaboration, provided they retain their jobs. Under this condition, for many, Christianity is seen as a set of rules and obligations to be kept and doctrines to be learned and less as a means of life and fulfilment of their faith-commitment. In practice, the people no longer feel satisfied with Christianity and its organization as a substitute for the symbolic pattern of life that existed in the traditional family system of *umunna*.

The question of the Gospel message and culture is really a concern that preoccupies all local Churches today. The apostles confess that they are impelled by an inner force, the Holy Spirit, to proclaim and to confess what they have seen, heard, and experienced. In the same way, we are compelled to express in this work an aspect of the existential pastoral challenges as observed, experienced and heard in relation to mission in Igboland of Nigeria and beyond.

3.2. The problem of Church collaboration in Igboland literature

The aim of literature presentation is to gain an understanding as to what extent various authors and theologians, have responded to the issue of poor pastoral collaboration. It will also present their point of views *par rapport* our approach and calls for a change of model in view of the growing development of today's Church in Igboland of Nigeria. The participation of the new evangelization in the present nature of being Church is a task incumbent on all of Christ's faithful in Igboland of Nigeria in particular and in Africa, generally. As regards the lay faithful in particular, the recent Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici*, is a "powerful clarion that calls them to play an active, conscientious and responsible role in the Church's evangelization mission"¹⁰. The Pre-Vatican model of Church is supposed to have been overtaken; hence, theologians are calling for a change of model, especially Igbo theologians whose environmental structures still reflect the old system of institutionalism/individualism.

10 Synod of Bishops Special Assembly for Africa, Lineamenta, Vatican City 1990, p. 24.

The above discussion has presented a synoptic view of the establishment and of the engagement of the laity in the Igbo-Nigerian Church along with the tension involved and also between the cultural life of the people and the new religion. There is no doubt that some Igbos or Africans have written, on their different perspectives, concerning the clergy-laity relationship.

Regarding the problem of collaboration, Bishop Michael Cleary of Banjul (The Gambia), maintains that the whole area of shared ministry and the application of the principle of collaborative ministry are the essential ingredients of leadership in the African Church that need to be examined. For him, “encouragement of dialogue and participatory decision-making among the laity is premium and leadership role need not be expressed in authoritarian terms, but in terms of a cordial relationship and service to one another”¹¹. Authority or leadership is not necessarily power over people. Good leaders know that their authority is God-given to serve others and to help design opportunities to develop the potentialities of all persons entrusted to their care. Therefore, an effective leader is a mentor, a model, a designer, a developer and an enabler¹², particularly, in terms of a shared responsibility through collaboration. Bishop Cleary focus is a bit closer to this perspective in terms of the use of authority as service and the participatory commitment of the laity in the decision-making of the Church. However, his view is given in only one article which narrows content, but it is an important sign that helps to demonstrate the fact that the problem needs attention as it has concerned the Igbos and even some of the African ecclesiastical authority members themselves.

Among the authors considered are mainly the Nigerian Bishops, priest and lay people, who are mainly Igbos. Here we have the Nigerian Bishop’s *Seminar Proceedings: New Era of Evangelization*¹³ and Professor Luke Nnamdi Mbefo, C.S.Sp.¹⁴. We also have

11 Cf. Quoted in P. Lwaminda, “*Formation of Agents of Evangelization For The Church-As-Family of God*”, in *AFER (African Ecclesial Review)*, Vol. 41, Numbers 4-6, August/October/December 1999, p.191.

12 *Ibid.*, p. 190.

13 *Proceedings of the National Seminar on New Era of Evangelization*, Sponsored by the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria, Ibadan: Ss. Peter and Paul Seminary Press, 1984.

14 L. Mbefo, *Towards a Mature Africa Christianity*, Nigeria-Enugu: Snaap Press Ltd, 1989.

such authors as Monsignor John Aniagwu¹⁵, A. E. Orobator, SJ¹⁶, J. Chukwuemeka Ekei¹⁷, Gabriel A. Ojo and David. Dodo¹⁸, V.A. Nwosu¹⁹, Maura Browne, SND²⁰ and J. Obi Oguejiofor²¹. In their texts and deliberations, these authors presented relevant articles that touched on the present nature of Igbo ecclesiology, collaborative organization and ministry, perspectives of evangelization, dialogue in general, inculturation and adaptation and the traditional religious life of the Africans that is part of their beingness. There are many other used authors that tried to handle African ecclesia problems. Generally, these insights widened my horizon of thought on the aspect that I finally chose to follow in view of the contextual problem in our Igbo ecclesiology.

However, I see that the presentation above is relevant to some extent, but not exhaustive in terms of articulating practical and specific areas where the lay people are denied their rights. Nevertheless, these insights contain some facts and a careful deliberation on them does contribute to our understanding of the existing problem between the laity and the clergy. The points stressed by these authors will help to create awareness that dialogue and collaboration are actually important to the agents of evangelization.

We will present more literary review in chapter two of this dissertation. In the rest of the thesis, we shall refer to some authors whose texts and opinions are relevant to our subject matter as they have contributed different perspectives to this theological insight of being Church, communal ecclesia after a critical analysis of the present ecclesia. Yet, how would these insights help us to address the issue of Igbo ecclesia collaboration?

15 Msgr. J. Aniagwu, Collaborative Ministry – Priests, Sisters and Brothers, Nigeria-Ibadan: Daily Graphics Press Ltd, 2001.

16 A. E. Orobator, The Church as Family – African Ecclesiology in its Social Context, Kenya-Nairobi: Kolbe Press, 2000.

17 J. Chukwuemeka Ekei, Justice in Communalism – Foundation of Ethics in African Philosophy, Nigeria-Lagos: Realm Communication Publication, 2001.

18 G. A. Ojo and D. Dodo, (eds), The Role of the Lay Person in the Church in Nigeria. Nigeria-kaduna: Layon Security and Colour Press, 1985.

19 V.A. Nwosu, The Laity and the Growth of Catholic Church in Nigeria – The Onitsha Story 1903-1987, Nigeria-Ibadan: Rex Charles and Patrick Ltd. Publication, 1990.

20 Maura, Browne, SND (ed.), The African Synod, Documents, Reflections and Perspectives, Maryknoll (NY): Orbis Books, 1996.

21 J. Obi Oguejiofor, The Influence of Igbo Traditional Religion on the Socio-political Character of the Igbo, Nigeria-Nsukka: Fulladu Publishing Company, 1996.

3.3 Specific approach

Our specific concentration will take into consideration all the above discussions that have to do with the actual ecclesia problem we have chosen to handle, the various ways the selected authors have discussed the issue in their respective fields and the effect of the problem to the Christian faith-commitment of the Igbo people in the light of their cultural lives. Our aim here is to present and to observe, to understand and to reflect on this ecclesial challenging problem of collaboration and inculturation facing the Nigerian-Igbo Church today. The intent in this dissertation is to propose, in the light of the analysis, an agreeable vision of ecclesiology that will be very relevant to the Igbos, a model that will harmonize more with their life structure and the trend of today's thoughtful ecclesiology in Africa. This process will involve ecclesial reconstruction that will improve the present adaptive structure that is foreign oriented. This is really our objective task, to reflect on this perspective and to offer helpful suggestions toward solving the observed challenging problem that is gradually eaten deep into the fabric nature of the Igbo ecclesiology among the agents of collaboration (clergy and laity).

There is no doubt that a good number of the African theologians have written extensively on the nature of the existing ecclesia, but none has so far, to the best of my knowledge, approached the issue intently as we have chosen to handle it. Thus, our perspective will focus on the problem of missionary collaboration that is tied to the existing nature of ecclesiology that looks foreign as it lacks inculturation to a reasonable extent in Igboland, and generally in Africa. It is unfortunate that after Vatican II which talked of "ecclesial communion", "clergy-laity collaboration, the Catholic Churches in Igboland of Nigeria still remain at the level of discussion. Our conviction is that the problem of ineffective collaboration has not been properly addressed, especially from the viewpoint of pastoral communal family of God, which touches on the lives of the people we have chosen to deal with. This is why it is useful to take up the challenge that touches on the structure and pastoral aspects of Igbo ecclesiology which affects the faith-commitment of the people who naturally live the life of communalism. As we shall see in the main work, communalism in our context goes beyond loyalty and commitment to the interests of one's own minority or ethnic group at the expense of the society as a whole. Communalism, by its

application in Igboland, is regarded as *umunnarism*, which has the tendency toward “equalitarian leadership”, “considerable incorporation” of other peoples and cultures and shares a lot in common like the notion of the extended family ecclesia as we shall see in the main text.

As an experienced member of the asymmetrical structure of ecclesial collaboration in Igboland, when I was asked to do my studies on inculturation as a doctoral programme by my Provincial Superior, I started to reflect on this issue. I set out to read the works of other theologians as a way of focusing my vision. I concentrated on related themes such as “clergy-laity collaboration”, “inculturation”, “nature of God’s Church”, “Church organization in Africa”, “theology of communion”, “attitude of Church authority and exercise”, “nature of seminary formation”, “the implication of theological reconstruction”, and so on, as possible ways of incarnating the gospel message in the light of my vision. The more I read these texts, the more I discovered that very few writers have actually approached the issue of our problem from the focus of the model of communal ecclesia as intensely as it requires. This includes pastoral communal collaboration, effective administrative participation of the laity in the activities of the Church and anthropological inculturation that touches on the lives of the people dynamically in close relation to the teachings of the Church. Finally, I chose to make my potential contribution by tailoring the issue from the grass-roots of the life of the people on a practical level, which challenges their dynamic function and purpose to work as a team of “family of families” instead of as individuals. This will involve the exploration of the cultural background to propagate the inherited faith that should be uniting instead of dividing, encouraging living in communalism instead of in individualism. With this orientation, I then thought to deal with the issue of ecclesial collaboration in the spirit of communalism or *umunnarism* from the aspect that is taken for granted by the authorities of the Igbo Church.

This term *umunnerism* is derived from such Igbo word as *umunna* (*extended*) or *umunne* (*limited in scope*) which is so comprehensive in its nature and manifests the strong unifying relationship between the visible and invisible realities. In African traditional religion, “humanity is sacred because of its vital link with transcendental realities of the

world in its wholeness”²². The sense of the sacredness is concretely manifested through the Igbo concept of corporate existence or the spirit of communalism. Thus, *umunna/umunne* could be translated to mean in Igboland: *nwanne or umunne*. While *umunne* designates plurality and refers to children of the same parents, “*umunna*” projects many connotations by its use. In one sense it could mean children of the same father but with different mothers in a polygamous family. In another sense, the term *umunna* extends to half brothers and sisters and include uncles, nieces and their families, etc. Yet, at another level “it stands for the extended families of a putative ancestor”²³ or clan and beyond. By extension it applies to people from the same town, area and circumscription, etc. Distant relations become *umunna* by virtue of one covenant or common interests, especially, as they speak one language like the Igbos or having one affinity, like religious affinity – God’s people are *umunna n’Christi*, (brothers and sisters in Christ). The use of *umunna* is so elastic and appropriate to be used when dealing with communal activities in Igboland due to its tight unification principles.

Thus, the choice of *umunnarism* is our best concept to describe the corporate communal relationship that we anticipate among the people of God who are really committed to function in unity and love. This is because in Igboland, people’s spirit of collaboration is tied to the ancestral relationship that unites families, clans and tribal communities together. Thus, Igbo community in general consists of the “*visible*” and the “*invisible*” realities that give credence to the sacredness of relationships. Some of the ways through which Igbos internalize the sense of the sacred and the sacredness of a human beings living in community are through: collaborative *umunna* meetings, communal worship, covenants with divinities and others, oath taking, sacrifices, prayers, initiation ceremonies and periodic festivals and atonements that bring people together. The presentation of this model of relations as we shall see later in the main text would help the agents of evangelization to apply the cultural spirit of communal collaboration as they maintain the sense of the sacred within the ecclesial worship and relationship. It will also help to instil the cordial attitude of “deep respect for the things of God and anything

²² Insight from my discussion with Professor Anthony Ekwunife when he visited United States during his sabbatical leave, June 22, 2005. See also his textbook, A.N. Ekwunife CSSp., Consecration in Igbo Traditional Religion, Nigeria-Enugu: Snaap Press Ltd, 1990.

²³ *Ibid*.

associated with divine like property, liturgy, consecration, devotions, etc.; while at the same time, foster in them a great appreciation for the value of the human person and human talent, the most sacred of all creatures²⁴. We will try to demonstrate in this thesis that by its nature, *umunna* perspective model of ecclesia will be fundamental for Igbo Christian Church for the root-taking of the Gospel message, for a healthy human collaborative relationship to grow particularly among the agents of evangelization and for all the members of the society in general. For effectiveness of ecclesiology in Igboland in view of its structural and cultural challenges, Christ has to become incarnate, not just in the longing, but also in the way of relationship, of harmonious administration and of human life-style that bears witness.

Influencing the subject matter and approach of this study are the following implications: the new vision of the Church as “*umunna/communal ecclesia oriented*” which also designates “communalism/*umunnarism*”; the incarnation through faith-commitment, and through the spirit of collaboration and dialogue that need to be expressed through inculturation. Thus, “*umunna*” and “communal” will be used alternatively to mean the same thing in this dissertation. Succinctly put, our effort in this project is to show the need for a deep self-conversion, a deep faith-commitment, leading to a strong collaborative relationship among the people of God. These will realized through the reconciliation of cultures, a self-understanding in relation to communal activities and a re-education of memory within a situation where an ominous cloud of hopelessness threatened to engulf the people. What is at stake is that there is a lack of collaboration due to ineffective inculturation and the spirit of clericalism and institutionalism that prevails in the pastoral structure being realized in an asymmetric system of relationship between the clergy and the laity. All these characterize the present ecclesiology that cries for amelioration.

Pope John Paul II characterizes the organic communion as “diversity and complementarity of vocations and states of life, of ministries, charisms and responsibilities as well as an intrinsic unity and mission involving all the baptised”²⁵. This is important

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ John Paul II, “*Address to the participants of the Symposium on the Participation of the Laity in the Priestly Ministry*”, April 22, 1994, quoted in D. M. Schnurr (Secretary), *Together in God’s Service: toward a theology of ecclesial lay ministry*, Washington, D.C., 1988, p. 150.

because life of Igbo is, by its nature, communal and as such, is not imported or novel theological idea to the people. It would be presumptuous for anyone to negate or challenge the commonly accepted Igbo notion of communality and interrelatedness that exist through the extended family system. These notions and values exemplify the common identity of Igbo. This dissertation will stress that the lay people, as well as all the members of God's family in Igboland of Nigeria, deserve to participate and collaborate actively in the progress of the Church that should be communally oriented. It is important to note that this dissertation is not denying the existence of communal practice of some groups of the societal or pastoral workers; rather it is trying to project the existential internal challenging factors experienced on such structures and how individuals feel about their Church, which in some situations, are better experienced or discussed than observed by an external person.

In this thesis, we will take communion as a theological understanding of interdependence. This means that the ecclesia and functional relationship of all the agents of evangelization will be considered as a collegial relationship between the diocesan bishop and the priests, the bishop and the laity within a local Church, and a maintained Episcopal collegiality with other Bishops and the Pope within the universal Church. The ecclesial spirit of communalism will involve the expression of unity in diversity such as: use of talents, acknowledgement of roles and of ministries, and the proper application of cultural values for the effective propagation of the Gospel message in common. Collaboration by its nature, is dynamic. It requires changes through structural adjustments in orientation, administration and in the pattern of life-style on both the clergy and the laity respectively. Thus, communalism implies "shared responsibility" and a "partnership in governance" which, in practical terms, involves the clergy and laity together²⁶ working in collaboration, in participation.

In view of this communal spirit, following the challenging pastoral problems and the missionary orientation today that stresses on the "incarnation of the Gospel News", after the teaching of Vatican II, this dissertation will try to verify to what extent the concept "Church as *communal* family of God" as a proposed vision could serve as a befitting model that will

26 P. T. Rausch, Priesthood Today: an appraisal, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1992, pp. 121-122.

capture and give meaning to the mission in Igboland as it would reflect the African Church-as family of God. This proposed ecclesiology is an option that has a dual origin, culturally and ecclesiastically, and it will stand as a possible best option for the Igbos. Culturally, this ecclesial model would draw its origin from the “extended family system” that guides the life of communalism in Africa, including the Igbos. African Synod describes African extended family as “the sacred place where all the riches of our tradition converge”²⁷. Ecclesiastically, “its origin is in the Blessed Trinity” knowing that the intrinsic value of a community is the bond of communion²⁸. While it is the task of Christian families to bring the heart of this extended family (a witness which transforms from inside our vision of the world, being inspired by the spirit of the beatitudes and challenges the various tasks of the society), the Holy Spirit’s task at its depths will be the bond of communion²⁹ as a unifier. A type of family ecclesia that will be central and suitable to match with today’s African challenging problems: socio-political, economic and religious needs of our time. It is pertinent to deduce here that the problem we are dealing with is not only particular to the Igbos, but in one way or the other, touches other African countries as many of these have experienced the same type of challenges due to evangelization and colonization in history, although, their tackling approaches may differ.

However, to develop this kind of thought, the nature of the proposed ecclesiology of God’s family as envisaged, will pose a challenge of how to work out the theology of the “communal ecclesia” from the point of view of *umunnarism*. It will involve “exploring all the riches contained in this concept”³⁰ in relation to the cultural life of the Igbos. This mandate will challenge us in this work to use our innovative imagination and creative ingenuity to give a new face to the model of ecclesiology in relation to the contemporary mission’s challenging problems that pervert the thought of African theologians today.

27 Cf. Maura, Browne SND, The African Synod. Documents. Reflections, Perspectives, New York: Maryknoll, Orbis Books, 1996.

28 Cf. *Ibid.*, Message 20.

29 Cf. *Ibid.*, Messages 20 and 27.

30 John Paul II, Ecclesia in Africa (Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation), Nairobi, Kenya: Paulines Publications, 1995, p. 63.

Moreover, formulating this model of Church constitutes only the beginning of the long process, the contours of which often prove challenging. This model of being Church entails the task of exploring the full range of meaning, implications and consequences of what it signifies not only within the Igbo culture and the ambience of Africa, but also within the universal ecclesiology, as we shall see further in the main work. As a new insight, and moreover, as an aspect that has always captivated my interest in the past, I decided to explore the possibility of this proposal that is based on cultural and religious reconstruction, “man, know yourself”, and understand the need of mutual relationship, working in collaboration for faith-deepening in the family which is modeled after the life of Christ, the head of his communal ecclesia.

This type of being Church reflects the generic system of communalism. What it means is that most of the values for authentic collaboration in relation to communal ecclesia that should exist between clergy and laity in Igbo Christianity have their concrete focus on the culture of the people. Some of the underlying principles for an inculturated Christian collaboration in Igboland exist in the traditional Igbo spirit of *umunnarism* (or in the African extended family system) as we shall see in the main text.

This project acknowledges the fact that Africa is a vast continent, diverse and characterised by ecological, racial, ethnical and historical differences, but yet, it is one entity and has a lot of shared similarities. While we concentrate on the Igbo people of the Nigerian Church, general statements will be made on African culture knowing quite well that there are certain fundamental cultural ideas and values which the majority of Africans share in common. These include among others, knowledge of God as a Supreme Being, faith, life, extended family system, ancestor veneration, etc., and etc. that bind people together.

4. Working hypothesis

We are concerned with the internal pastoral problem that the Church in Igboland inherited along with the advent of Christianity and colonialism. This is mainly the issue of “European cultural imposition and supremacy” that reflects on poor collaboration among the

agents of evangelization. Thus, our concern is that Christianity as inherited in Igboland, which to some extent, does not adequately meet up with the cultural and spiritual needs of the people ought to be reviewed for more positive results, the growing population notwithstanding. The inherited religion lacks cultural identity and as such, many Igbos find it difficult to reconcile their belief-system with their existential life realities. The Igbos are not used to the life of imposition, life of unquestionable absolute authority nor the European type of superiority that downgrades many and extols few. Rather, they excel in participation, in collaboration and in cordial human relationships, which are the positive fruits of dialogue.

Dialogue, as expressed here, involves harmony of persons, of the Gospel culture with the culture of the Igbos. This entails the ability to integrate the challenging opposites to resolve the conflicting paradoxical issues that may arise from the two. It also involves a dialectical reasoning on the seemingly contradictory forces of cultures to synthesize the faith into a blend of give and take. This involves a dialogue between the culture of the evangelized (i.e. the religious cultural life of the Igbo people) and the culture of the evangelizer (that carries the Gospel message) in view of the administrative and collaborative ministry. This is a mutual contract of values from both cultures while the essential aspects of Christian doctrine remain intact, but the style or mood of operation, the context and the spirit, will be inculturated, leading to a transformation of reality, the cultural way of worship and of governance. Evangelization is an intercultural process and its effectiveness refers to a faith in one or another culture form (that bears the gospel message which is a pattern of life like every culture is) encountering another culture as man is a cultural entity. As neither the Gospel nor the culture should be independent of the other, both interact at a deeper level of mutual give and take that gives birth to a synthesis. A synthesis then becomes the outcome of the mutual interrelated dialogue of the two cultures, (traditional religion and Christianity).

Thus, the overt and covert rejection of the traditional extended family structure and organization in preference to an alien cultural organization brought by foreign European missionaries and their teaming African allies have not only crippled the new envisaged collaboration, but more, deposited incalculable negative legacies in Igbo Christian Church organizations and practices till today. *Until these muddled foreign elements in the present*

Igbo Christian Church organization are removed or revealed and readdressed, any talk of real root-taking of the Gospel message in Igboland will misfire as it is the case at present. To effectuate this, foreign ideas need to be inculturated within the life-style of the people. Unless this is accomplished, the Christian faith will continue to be superficial and artificial, even when it overly seems to be successful, perhaps, due to numerical strength. From the look of things, it seems that the early missionaries were concerned with quantity instead of quality Christians during their period of evangelization. Dom Nwachukwu tries to explain the main reason for this situation by saying that the home boards or bodies that sent those missionaries needed quantifiable statistical reports to back up their drives for funds. This scramble for “converts” eventually gave rise to bigotry and disunity that is detrimental to the real lives of the people today.

However, the emphasis here is that the Gospel must take seriously the context into which it is being planted if it is to become natural and permanent in the Igbo cultural life. Actors of evangelization must learn how to collaborate administratively as Igbos through the spirit of sharing and communing, spirit of respect and love. Thus, this dissertation aims at dabbling into serious assessments of perhaps a larger context within this “New Era of Evangelization”, the “New Millennium” in Igboland of Nigeria. *Making this a reality in the cultural life of the people means that the Church has to be prepared to go beyond the present as to confront, theologically and pastorally, the contradictory facets that militate against its spirit of true incarnation and collaboration.* The underlying factor that gave rise to our problem is the nature of the present ecclesiology (or the continual practice of an out-moded system of being Church) in Igboland that is responsible for the formation of characters that function as clergy leaders. To some extent, it lacks a cultural system of looking at administration and structural formation that is communal instead of individualistic. It is rigid in its hierarchical perception of power and authority, being clericalized and as such, Pre-Vatican II. Moreover, it is an ecclesiology of quantity and not of quality in matters of faith-commitment and is much influenced by the heartless political system of administration that does not hearken to the cry of the masses, a situation where hearts are hardened. We are therefore proposing an effective application of inculturation as well as a plan to improve this type of pre-Vatican II ecclesiology. This means that if the

issue of ecclesiology, due to the nature of its practice, is resolved in theory and practice, the problem of collaboration would be resolved.

Thus, the *fundamental content of this thesis* is organized and structured on the following hypothetical presuppositions: (1) that since the planting of Christianity in Nigeria, the clergy have operated under the image of unlimited power imposition that affect the spirit of effective collaboration among the agents of evangelization in Igboland, (2) that following the new proposal of the Church as God's family, a movement toward full maturity of Catholicism through faith-commitment and inculturation, there is need to change the pre-Vatican II image of ecclesia (Fada's Church) to accommodate all the people of God for a fruitful communal collaboration, and (3) that to make a passage from the pre-Vatican II asymmetrical ecclesiology of adaptation and imposition to a new proposed ecclesiology, the Igbo Church must not only take seriously into account the theological references of the universal Church from the Gospel to the present tradition but also the essential fabric structure of the Igbo culture that is communal oriented.

Adaptation process in African evangelization means "in practice, a peripheral, superficial, non-essential activity; it contains the germs of perpetual Western European superiority and domination"³¹. "It was an imposition on the cultural life of the African Christians" and as such, is "being rejected in missions" and should be replaced with inculturation which leads to incarnation of the universal Church in a local culture to make a community of true Christians³². As we identify these two points as the main root-causes of poor pastoral collaboration, it will imply then that when they are treated, there will be much improvement in the system of relationship between the clergy and the laity working together, character differences notwithstanding. What is important is that the Igbos must understand, love and serve God in their contextual cultural reality. God must speak through their own way of life, their medium of thought, administration and experience. Thus, the nature of the new model of ecclesia must reflect local tonality and not foreign based in its contextual cultural application. Then, we can talk about Church as a family when

31 O. A. Onwubiko, The Theory and Practice of Inculturation – Christian Mission and Culture in Africa, Vol. II, Nigeria-Enugu: Snaap Press, 1992, p.10.

32 Cf. *Ibid*, p. 10.

cooperation, mutual dialogue, respect and true love of God exist among the members. This means that inculturation must be applied so that the message will be rooted in the cultural life of the people.

In the same way, it will be difficult for us to realize the proposed communal ecclesial family of God in its true form if an effort is not made to review the nature of our today's formation in Igboland that is authoritarian, lacking real dialogue and the spirit of collaboration, rather, is tension packed. This is because seminary as a place of formation, has a very fundamental goal to play. Priests in the field of ministry reflect their nature of formation. Following the present situation of things, it is a condition which we regard as being unsatisfactory. The effectiveness of collaboration, therefore, depends to a large extent, on the true formation of the heart and mind that will learn to share pastoral activities with others.

Thus, to verify the validity of our hypothesis, we need to approach the issue from the point of view of social sciences, anthropological, biblical and theological perspectives that will guide us to consider the communal family of God model of ecclesia with its befitting application of inculturation and relevant education. Simply put, we need harmony between Christianity and culture, and a communal ecclesiology that would reflect inculturation in such a way that it could bear fruit in terms of true collaboration at all levels of pastoral work. But, how do we arrive at clarifying the right articulation of these key elements of our research, one may ask? Let us look for a methodological approach that could be suitable for the purpose.

5. Methodology and process of its application

The methodological process will be discussed under the following subheadings: (1) applied praxiological method and the explanation of its four perspectives, and (2) the application of the four perspectives in our research work.

5.1 Presentation of the praxiological method and perspectives

The method of “*praxéologie pastorale*” (*pastoral praxiology*) as developed and approached by the Faculty of Theology and Religious Sciences at the University of Montreal, is more of an inductive application adopted under four perspectives: (1) *observation*, that presents and analyses an actual situation, (2) *interpretation*, that elaborates the meaning of what have been analysed under various disciplines, among which is theology and its foundational references, (3) *intervention* that proposes possible solutions to the analysed situation in coherence with the interpretation, consequently provides the test of improvement and (4) *prospective*, that presents a projection of the ecclesial community which in effect, would be the outcome of the kind of interpretation and intervention put forward.

As our problem lies within pastoral theology, we will be using the praxiological method that will help to observe and to reflect on our contextual situation. The focus of praxiology has to do with human actions, hence, its importance in our research. We chose it among other methods because it deals with the actions of man within a group or a society. It permeates and observes all aspects that interest human sciences like psychology, sociology, philosophy and history that are involved, not only in everyday life, but also, in every societal set up. With the help of praxiology as an analytical method, we shall be able to observe all the aspects or perspectives of theology in practice. It helps to describe the reality and to review the functions of all the systems within the dynamic structure.

We prefer to use praxiology as our method because it is an all-embracing process. This principle of all embraciveness, for Don Brown, is known as “*phronesis*” or “*sagesse pratique*” or “*raison pratique*”. Gadamer calls it “*contemporary hermeneutics*”. For Jacques Audinet, this practical theology is not only a symbol of Church in action within a society, but also a discipline with a reality of what is experienced in a group that is in turn, within a wider group and in a specific project. By its nature, it imposes a verification of a particular type (i.e. *le lieu de vérification de la théologie*) projecting the characteristic nature

of the involving elements and variables through its functionality'³³. It is a link that verifies the practical aspects of theology that spells out God's salvific love and concern for humanity as the Church teaches and as it helps people to reflect on their daily life actions. This process of praxiology will help us to present, analyze and reflect on the dynamic situations in pastoral activities of the Igbos with a view to providing possible solutions. Hence, in our presentation, we are going to explain these four aspects of praxiology that we have chosen to use. In view of our scope however, we shall begin with the essence or function of *observation* as it constitutes the first aspect of our method.

The essence of observation as a method is to help the researcher to study a place and its organic structures, as they exist in their different groups or individually. An important aspect for the justification of our selected method is the fact that practical theology, through its processes, permeates all aspects of human social structure. Praxiology helps to observe and analyze these areas holistically considered, as they knit together and influence one another: social, political, economic and religious interactions of the people in their different environmental systems. This discipline comes as a proper mediator for all the diverse domains that play on human system as it is approached through a thoughtful dynamic method of "*voir*", "*juger*", and "*re-agir*". The aspect of reaction takes us to the second process of praxiology, which is the interpretation of the observed and analyzed data of the first aspect.

André Beauregard sees the gesture of *interpretation* as very important in praxiology as it follows description, even from another point of view, it "*traverse l'ensemble de la démarche*"³⁴. For him, interpretation is another way of referring to hermeneutics. He sees interpretation as the second lecture of the first work that helps to give more insight to the original observed presentation. In this case, it aims at searching for the sense of the meaningful objective of the problem as observed³⁵. Thus, interpretation presupposes the first

33 Cf. Jacques Audinet, *Ecrits de théologie pratique*, Novalis, Ottawa, 1995, p. 242.

34 A. Beauregard, "*La pratique de l'interprétation théologique en praxéologie pastorale, problèmes et défis*" in J.-G. Nadeau (ed.), *La praxéologie pastorale. Orientations et parcours*, t. 2 [Cahiers d'études pastorales, 5], Montréal, Fides, 1987, p. 44.

35 Cf. *Ibid.* pp. 43-44.

stage of description and analysis of the given situation as done in the observation; and in its second phase process, it projects further illumination on what is observed and analysed. Through this way, one sees very clearly the hidden factors that are to be explored in the process of presenting the true meaning of the situation historically. Gilles Raymond made us understand that the system of interpretation is seen as the object of multiple research work and at the same time viewed as the heart of our everyday activities. He maintains that it is through the help of interpretation that the journalists or pastoral analysts are able to present clearly the *pros* and *cons* of our life's activities³⁶. After the process of interpretation, the next stage is the intervention as the third aspect of praxiology.

The word “intervention” etymologically means to “come in-between”. It is “to go between” as an arbiter or a mediator, who intervenes to settle or to resolve an issue for better. Intervene, as a verb, means to “to take action in a situation that one was not originally involved”³⁷ like the police officers intervening in a dispute to make peace. It is an expectation, a desire to influence an action for better or for worse, but in most cases for positive development and progress. The purpose of intervention is to influence. It is a deliberate action, willingly calculated and carried out for the purpose of improving an existential structure or situation. Thus, intervention has multiple purposes: to prevent, to ameliorate or to interrupt, etc., as it presupposes an existing practice that is already in place. The objectives of intervention can be seen as follows: the needs within for amelioration or change, the implantation of the programme and the effects of intervention. Intervention then, is closely followed by the process of prospective.

In our method, prospective plays a role in the fourth stage of the process. By its synthetic nature, it takes the past into account, and in light of the present, it proposes the future that will help to broaden and to enlighten the contextual situation. The word “prospective” is an adjective from the verb/noun “prospect” which refers to something one wants or aspires to achieve. It consists of assembled elements of planification through

36 Cf. G. Raymond, «*Des interprétations qui aveuglent ou illuminent Jn 9*» in J.-G. Nadeau (ed.), *L'interprétation, un défi de l'action pastorale* [Cahiers d'études pastorales, 6], Montréal, Fides, 1989, p. 135.

37 Cf. J. Sinclair (ed.), *English Learner's Dictionary*, London: Harper Collins Publishers, 1994, p.5 03.

verification, appreciation and calculation. This process is concerned with what should be as it makes decisions that will affect the present existing elements within the system for a more preferred and improved new system of operation³⁸.

5.2 Strategic process for the application of praxiological method to our problem.

We have presented our problem of collaboration as it exists among the agents of evangelization. We have also seen above the relevant method and the explanation of this model processes that we have chosen to work with in our project. The pertinent question here is: how are we going to proceed with each step of the method?

5.2.1 Observation

Our observation of the problem will be presented under two sub-chapters. While the first chapter concentrates on the internal dynamics as closely observed, the second chapter complements it with literature review. Our compilation of data includes information from questionnaire, group presentation and dialogue discussions, telephone interviews, Internet correspondences and collections from literary texts. This process of observing and describing involved the researcher to be in touch with relevant personnel and documents of the circumscription. Thus, being an Igbo man and an itinerant missionary was an added advantage, as parts of the description of the problem were mainly covered through both local and distant Igbo background experiences and information that were of immense help.

5.2.1.1 Nature of the interview guide

Two guiding questionnaires were used to help the author get the necessary information he needed for this work. The main one was based on the Igbo culture, the early missionary evangelization and the clergy-laity collaboration while the other, the complement, was based on the seminary formation in Igboland respectively, (refer to appendices 4 & 5). An

38 F. Hatem, La prospective, pratique et méthodes, Paris: Economica, C. 1993, p. 385.

interview guide prepared by the researcher was used to ensure that the interview was focused, though broadened during discussions. Generally, the interview guide was aimed at eliciting information on the clergy-laity collaboration, academic and mutual staff-students collaboration, and to the extent inculturation is taught in the seminary and its practical application in mission.

5.2.1.2 Concentrative areas and description of sample population

Generally, in Nigeria, we have 49 dioceses and 9 provinces. My concentrative area is on the Igbos, who occupy the Southern zone of Nigeria, being represented as the former “Onitsha Ecclesiastical Province”, which has now given birth to another new Province of Owerri. This means that in Igboland, we have two “Ecclesiastical Provinces”: Onitsha and Owerri respectively. Seminary research is mainly based on the dioceses and major seminaries within Igbo zone, especially within the Province of Onitsha, where most of the major seminary institutions are established, including the parishes where Spiritans are working. Within the confinement of my research, we have 13 dioceses and four major theological institutions in Igboland of Nigeria. Out of these dioceses, I concentrated on 7 that are more populated and a bit old established that gave birth to the rest.

The population for seminary part of the study consists of four major theological seminary institutions in Igboland of Nigeria. Due to the limited amount of time available for this study, a sample population of institutions for student interview of this research was limited to two major seminaries. There are two reasons for choosing these two institutions: firstly, they are the long established theological institutes in Igboland compared with the other two minor ones that are just springing up from the main mother ones; secondly, one of the two chosen institutions belongs to the Bishops while the other one belongs to the Religious Congregation that gave a good representation of the seminaries. The overall student population was estimated to be 650 and there were about 45 full-time teaching staff excluding the part-time lecturers in the two theological departments. These are in the Southern part of Nigeria, a dominantly Christian region with Bigard Memoria as the mother seminary where the majority of us attended, accounting for about 75% of the seminarians in

the above given figure, excluding its philosophical department. The other Seminary is the Spiritan Institute of Theology (SIST), mainly for the Religious and owned by the Holy Ghost Fathers. However, other Religious Congregations do send their seminarians there for formation. SIST started around 1988 while Bigard Memorial Seminary began in 1951. The average chronological age of students in these major seminaries is twenty seven by approximation.

From each of the two schools, equally predetermined 6-sampling student respondents per institution were selected for an interview. The category of students considered were those in their final year, who had acquired enough experience in the institutions, including the deacons. As almost all the teachers passed through the mother seminary, their selection was not limited to any class, length of teaching experience or due to their age. The actual respondents were selected through the stratified random sampling technique. For fairness, an independent random sample without replacement was used in this selection. The researcher applying the questionnaire cut pieces of paper on which a “Yes” or “No” was inscribed with equal numbers of both for the students. These papers were folded and mixed in a bag. Those who drew a “Yes” were interviewed while those who drew a “No” were not.

5.2.1.3 Categories of people interviewed

The categories of the persons interviewed are such sample representatives as follows: members of the diocesan laity Council ; members of the parish Council; diocesan pastoral workers; parish pastors (former and current as at the time of interview); parish cooks (one was currently expelled from mission service after many years); catechists (young and old); clergy and lay apostolates from other African countries (including Reverend Sisters and Brothers); ordinary parish members; final year theology seminarians; seminary staff ; seminary director (retired); traditional religious members; youths (practicing and non-practicing Catholics); ex-seminarian and ex-convent Sister. A total number of 50 respondents were chosen for the general study, but 39 responded on their areas of concern. Generally, among this number, we have 12 seminarians and 27 clergy and laity respectively. It is important to remark here that the two administered questionnaires were prepared to

enable the researcher collect relevant and sufficient materials to work with as the method is qualitative (case study) oriented and not a quantitative type. Some responded to questions that pertain to them, either as pastoral workers, leaders of Councils or as clergy.

5.2.1.4 Procedure

The researcher assured those interviewed of the necessary confidentiality involved. The interviews or discussions were conducted on different days and times, depending on the locations of the dioceses, the institutions and the parishes involved. Appointments were made earlier before the date of the interview on the part of pastoral workers and some lecturers. A maximum of four days were allowed for the respondents to reflect on the nature of the questionnaires to insure well thought-out responses. Some responses reached me through e-mail. But, the complementary questionnaire for the students was administered the same day of the interview.

Generally, the process of the main questionnaire interview took some time as it was more of face to face style of approach that involved individual or collective discussions. It is important to note that following the nature of the provoking thoughts that arose during discussions, the questionnaire was not exhaustive by its nature, as people's responses determined further questions that were posed to them for getting more facts that guided the presentation of this dissertation.

Based on the respondents' responses, the first eleven objective questions posed to the seminarians were grouped according to their corresponding ideas and charted. Then, they were analysed with the help of their given codes, by using the simple approximation of percentage computation method. It helped us in the observation of "seminary dynamism" in chapter one. However, generally, the insights from the dialogue questionnaire administered to clergy and laity alike, and other relevant information acquired, guided us all through the presentation of the dissertation along with other textual enlightenments, the purpose of which they were made. What this means is that the information acquired was discussed in the light of the relevant literary presentation on the areas relating to the subject matter

(mainly at the observation level and at the intervention and prospective stages) that has to do with the nature of the existing ecclesiology and administration that need to be improved in light of a pastoral inculturation and communal structural bases.

In light of the acquired relevant information, our first chapter is focused on creating awareness to the existing realities of life in Igboland and aims at identifying different elements and variables. It does this by presenting the dynamic structures as they exist at the diocesan level that embraces parishes and seminary houses of formation in accordance with the findings of the interviews. Through this process, hidden areas of life were touched, like those vital spheres of human relationships: existential problems of clergy-laity internal structures that have been affecting the collaborative dynamism in pastoral activities, following the delimitation of our dissertation.

The second chapter gives more credence to the first through the review of literature and other pertinent materials that helped us to observe how other authors perceive the same issue. In view of the nature of our research, we have adequate literary coverage that helped to broaden the understanding of our ecclesiastical problem. Thus, the review of literary texts involves references to Nigerian and African authors and personalities, but mainly the Igbos. These people have written or had some experiences on the issues of clergy working with the laity and the seminary nature of formation, following their different approaches to the problem of collaboration. This second chapter closely follows the same system of format as in chapter one, but has its perspective as a complement. This means that we will present the textual reviews on clergy-laity collaboration, on Gospel-culture dialogue and on the nature of seminary formation in Igboland in particular and in areas that affect Africa in general. We will try to present three stages of seminary formation in the history as observed. This process will help us to uncover a reasonable period with good insight, knowing the fundamental role of the structures in our problem. These periods include the early beginnings (1930-1960), the post independence period (1960–1980), and from 1980 to the present time. They will be followed with the analysis and conclusion of the observation that calls for a new model of ecclesiology for effective collaboration among the actors of evangelization in Igboland of Nigeria in Africa.

5.2.2 Interpretation

In our observation, we will proceed by searching for suitable concepts that would address the observed problems of Pre-Vatican II ecclesiology that gave rise to poor collaboration in Igboland. For the step of interpretation, we have to explore four different spheres of disciplines for our reflection in view of the problem. These are: human sciences, anthropological, missiological and theological perspectives, but not compartmentalized. Thus, the first reflexive application has to be made through the mixed application of human sciences and theology, which will enable us to use the pertinent theories that will match our observed problem of poor inculturation, potentially due to the structure of the existing ecclesiology. This is where we will have to present a theory of “inculturation” to be complemented with its twin sisters “dialogue” and finally “collaboration” for clarification of the issues as they are implicated in the observation.

As the Church problem has to do with the neglect of the people’s culture during the early evangelization, the second approach will concentrate on cultural anthropology that will help us to examine closely on the life of the Igbos before the early evangelization. The aim is to present the nature of the cultural lives of the people that could have easily been absolved and cohered with the Christian religion if it were well inculturated. It will also serve as a point of reference for effective inculturation for the proposed new model of ecclesia. This is where we have to present the characteristic nature of the Igbo worldview with a concentration on the characteristic lives of the people, especially on the issue of collaboration through the practice of communalism.

As references are made on the nature of ecclesiology of the early evangelization that is associated with the problem of collaboration and inculturation in Igboland, in the third aspect, we will present missiology which has a historical import, being implicated in this project. This missiological approach will help to broaden the scope of our evaluating problem from a more divergent lens and for a clearer understanding of our observed analysis. Our reflection on the nature or method of the early missionary evangelization will help us to determine the nature of the received Gospel message in relation to the existing nature of ecclesiology.

The fourth reflection of our interpretation will be based on theological (biblical and historical) perspective. In this chapter, we will make reference to the bible to present how Christ worked with his disciples within the culture of Palestine. This biblical aspect will help to review how Christ related with his apostles in his earthly ministry and how this was continued by the early Christians and by Saint Paul respectively, in contrast with the present issue at hand. Christ presented himself as a humble servant (Mk 10:45; 22:27; Jn. 13:1-20) who collaboratively worked with his chosen apostles in love and understanding, in spite of their inability to understand his mission. The life of the early Christian Community is one of *Cor unum et anima una* - a sharing community that has some resemblance with the spirit of Igbo communalism. As the communal life of the early Christian later changed in the history of the Church and in relation with our problem, we will go further to treat the Council of Trent. We chose the Council of Trent because it gave more emphasis to the hierarchical cultic notion of institution, which equipped the clergy with an unreserved power in the Church at the expense of the laity.

Therefore, to broaden the scope of our understanding of the problem of clergy-laity collaboration, we have to go beyond the Council of Trent to see what Vatican II and the Magisterial documents have to offer by examining their perspectives on the nature of ecclesial inculturation and on the development of the clergy-laity relationship. To balance this discussion, we will present the opinion of an African, particularly, an Igbo theologian on the same issue as he would logically draw the situation home. These insights will, no doubt, help us as we reflect on our thesis problem.

Being guided with the reflections and in view of our problem, we will emphasize the African way of collaboration that would respond to the current mission and gives more insight on how this phenomenon would be practiced in the cultural life of the people. This will be of help to strengthen the proposed new communal ecclesiology, especially, as it will be applied by the Igbos themselves and in consonance with the teaching of the Church on inculturation and the African Synod model of Church-as-family of God. By its divergent nature, inculturation will help to elucidate and give more meaning to our discussion that is

not disassociated with the need of the general Church and its authorities. Moreover, this type of approach will help us to see more clearly the short-comings of the Igbo existential ecclesiology that needs to be improved in light of these historical reflections.

The underlying principles for an inculturated African Christian collaboration exist primarily in the traditional extended family system, which characterizes the life of the Igbos. As it involves going beyond the context, due to broadened perspectives, we will resort to presenting a new model that we feel will be better in Igbo situation if given a chance: “the *communal* ecclesial model”. This will involve a true dialogue between Igbo culture and the Christian Gospel. Following the nature of the old ecclesia that is fraught with internal problems, we endorse this alternative ecclesia that is family and communally oriented as an ideal that has its origin from the Igbo extended family relationship. This will help the Igbos not to be seen any longer as a land out there to be conquered by the Gospel message read through the lens of another culture.

As a way of inculturation, we have to show the importance of the “extended family system” in justifying the choice of “the new ecclesia” as a good model for today’s Church in Igboland and in other African countries. We would make effort to show how this proposed new ecclesia will suit the African environment, the Igbos in particular and its relationship with the trinitarian doctrine and other existing models in the Church.

5.2.3 Intervention

The third process of our method of praxiology has to focus on intervention. In view of the interpretation and the existing ecclesiological structure in Igboland, we will attempt to match up the situation with the suitable intervening processes. Thus, in our intervention, in view of the observation and the interpretation, and more particularly, the proposed hypothesis, we will try to articulate the possible responses to our question as previously highlighted under the following points: application of relevant pedagogy of education that is healthy, presentation of the fraternal roles of agents of evangelization, suitable application

of inculturation and dialogue that will take care of the new model ecclesia and the poor faith-commitment respectively.

The base for the realization of the proposed collaborative system in our project has to be centred on the house of formation. The reason is that, fundamentally, such problems encountered in our pastoral missions such as asymmetrical relationship, wrong use of authority, poor collaboration, less respect for the other's personality, poor inculturation, etc., could be accounted for, to some extent, owing to the nature of the formation in our seminaries as previously observed. What it means is that it requires an urgent need to improve the quality of formation that is pertinent to meet the special circumstances the Church is called to evangelize in Igboland. This is because seminary is supposed to be an institution where the cultural family system and neighbourly spirit of love are nurtured and sustained. Seminary formators would play the essential role of training and encouraging seminarians to be free to "express their views sincerely and without fear of expulsion. This can be done by challenging them to be true to themselves. An atmosphere of insecurity and fear created through threats will suffocate sincerity among seminarians"³⁹. Therefore, there is need to emphasize the sense of community living and values to cut across authoritarian intimidation, ethnic and social boundaries. This calls for a review on the nature of formation in our major seminaries as they are presently Western oriented.

Articulating the problem of seminary formation as observed, we will have to consider different comparative pedagogies that are applicable in a classroom organization and will present the most relevant results in relation to our problem in formation houses that have to operate on mutual relationships. To achieve this, we will present and try to classify common elements of the different mind-sets among the lecturers (either with authoritarian or authoritative principles) in view of the observed analysis. It is in light of these mind-sets that we will be able to identify the nature of the teaching styles that will often be used interchangeably to achieve a given goal: This is where we will consider such mind-sets as authoritarian (autocratic), authoritative (assertive), and democratic. This is important because the teaching styles have their impact on the students' interrelationship with one

39 Dialogue with Prof. Ekwunife, *Op. cit.*

another and with their formators. In addition, we will examine a number of curriculum specialists regarding the relationships that should exist in our houses of formation. Seminary ought to be a place of communion and relaxed tension. Lay people should also avail themselves of the opportunity of being formed in the same spirit of communalism and in the sense of self-commitment.

This process will be followed with the second aspect which encompasses the organic functionalism of presenting a new system of collaboration among the agents of evangelization that will be explored in the diocese, parish and the basic community levels. The vocation of the faithful includes personal and communitarian aspects that are inseparable from one another in relation to our general theme of *umunna community worship*. An effort will be made to treat the pertinent roles of the local bishops, priests and laity, to ensure effective spirit of collaboration among these agents of evangelization. What is central here is that every function has to be seen as service to the community of the faithful who function with the spirit of love and mutual understanding.

While the college of Bishops is responsible for the universal Church, the Presbyterium (bishop and priests) carries on a shared ministry in the local Church: working in collaboration with the laity. Priests are bishop “Counsellors” as well as their sons and friends⁴⁰; in union with the laity, they form one body of Christ in a diocese or parish as they work together. Seeing the essential relationship that exists between bishops, priests, and laity in the spirit of collaboration, they will build up the kingdom of God on earth, which is Christ’s body. Where the contrary is the case, the spirit of God will be absent. In building up the body of Christ, we need a diverse membership and functional gifts to sustain it. This means that to build up the ecclesial family of God, no talent or gift should be wasted or ignored. All charisms should be channeled for use towards some form of apostolate in the spirit of a collaborative ministry that works through mutual dialogue among the agents of evangelization.

40 Cf. P0, 7 and LG, 28.

As a complement of the role of the agents of evangelization, we will present the third aspect of our intervention: the communal cultural collaborative ministry and the ideal application of inculturation of Christian worship coupled with societal activities in Igboland. While in the above presentation of intervention, the stress is more on collaboration, in this third aspect, the stress will be on the application of inculturation within Igboland by the agents of evangelization. The choice of inculturation as our theological option does not mean that it has no oppositions. Rather, such oppositions help to consolidate its reception, especially after the Extraordinary Synod of 1985 which recognized the importance of inculturation, by “distinguishing it from adaptation and rejected it – adaptation”⁴¹.

Inculturation is relevant here as it is a deeper process of incarnation which aims at immersing Christianity into a given culture. It has to be applied through dialogue, whereby the Gospel message will align with the cultural values of the people that were neglected through history. In view of collaboration, such topic as “towards an inculturated liturgy in Igboland” that is communal oriented will be treated to help us implore the good values of the culture to enrich the Gospel message. This includes an “inculturated way of presiding over the liturgical sacraments” that is a symbol of communion, need for “inculturated catechism” that will be taught through the use of proverbs, oral teaching techniques, cultural application of naming ceremonies, etc. These processes of inculturation will be contextual and at the same time acceptable in our liturgical practices. Worship, catechesis and Eucharistic liturgies are practical evidences of practising inculturation through a mutual dialogue between culture and the Gospel message that will help to address the faith-commitment of the people to avoid mass exodus of Catholic members to other mushroom Churches. African Church, as the soul of the society, should not only recognize and accept the interdependency as a healthy ecclesial practice (as we are dealing with the Igbo condition), but should also try to see that it is based on a healthy African cultural life of communalism, and at the same time, acts as a watch-dog of her societal practices.

41 O.A. Onwubiko, *Op. cit.*, p. 10.

5.2.4 Prospective

The fourth part of our method is the prospective. It is important to remark here that prospective as a synthesizer is not to be treated as a specific entity like other aspects of our method above, but is integrated in the general conclusion. By its nature, prospective tries to recapture all the other aspects: observation, interpretation and intervention as applied in our method of praxiology, thereby proposing what are wished to be the future ideal changes. These include: proposal of a solution to the problem of clergy-laity administrative collaboration, what collaboration should look like in the seminary and religious communities and what type of dialogue is expected between Christianity and the culture that receives it in view of our proposed hypothesis.

What it means is that in our dissertation, prospective will function, in the light of interpretation and intervention, as the pastoral application of our proposed possible solutions. Therefore, it is important to note that these three steps of our applied method will have to flow in cross-sections (fusion-bound) and not compartmentalized as they knit closely to each other generally because, one begins where the other stopped and in coherency. Prospective proposes a new way of looking at the reality. Thus, it would be prominently expressed within our conclusion as “wishful proposals”, pertinent to be explored in our new vision of ecclesiology. It will equally help to see that all the above named theories are put into proper use as they give credence and favour to the application of collaboration and real contextual inculturation. The dynamism within the diocese, the parish and the seminary community will be strengthened through a new organized cultural outlook of administrative collaboration where the leaders will see their work as service to the rest of the faithful.

PART ONE

OBSERVATION OF THE PROBLEM, DYNAMICS AND ANALYSIS

The problem we want to deal with is based on a poor collaboration that prevails among the agents of evangelization, clergy and laity in Igboland of Nigeria that has a lot to do with the exercise of power and authority within the Catholic Christian communities. The problem reflects the structure of the existing ecclesiology that lacks proper inculturation. This lack of effective collaboration or the spirit of dialogue has affected adversely the people's faith-commitment and the active participation of the Catholic laity in the Church's activities. Hence, we notice that, today in Igboland, many of the Catholic Christian communities: dioceses, parishes, religious congregations of men and women, natural families, etc., are still living in the Pre-Vatican II conception of ecclesiology where those on top lord it over the members of the community with less regard for their feelings. The issue here is that the teaching on collaborative ministry from the bible, the theology of the Church and the magisterial documents, has not been effectively implemented in Igboland. In practice, what is experienced is a type of ecclesia that is alienated from the true life of the people due to the nature of the early missionary evangelization that suppressed people's culture and planted "European Superior Culture" syndrome that capitalizes on the use of authoritarian power of administration and supremacy at all levels of activities including our seminary formation institutions. What this means is that in some areas, the clergy and laity find it difficult to work harmoniously without experiencing conflicts and power tussles in pastoral activities. Our observation is made here, based on these pastoral challenging problems.

For the clarity of purpose, we will handle the observation of this ecclesia problems of poor collaboration and inculturation under two chapters. The first chapter will dwell on the description that will be based on the different aspects of the pastoral activities in Igboland within the Catholic dioceses. The field observation will be made through oral interviews, telephone discussions and data collections, in relation to the problem of our research. The

second chapter will give more credence to the first through literature review and other gathered relevant information. It is a continuation of the first chapter, but with more concentration on the texts of authors and their various views concerning our subject matter. While the first chapter concentrates more on the internal dynamic function that gives rise to the present *drame*, the second chapter will try to broaden the scope as it concerns Igboland and perhaps, beyond it.

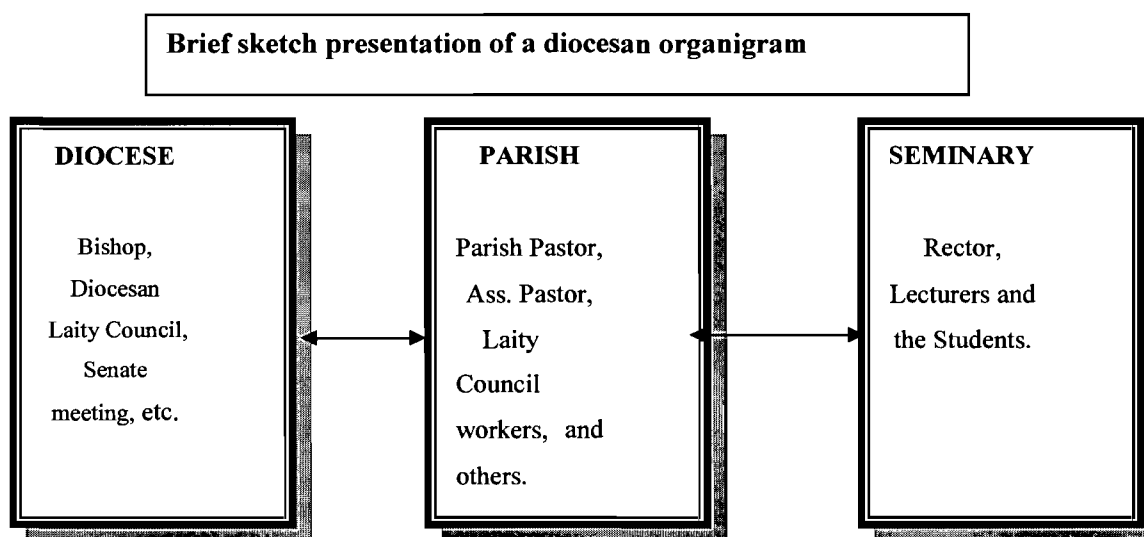
CHAPTER 1

INTERNAL DYNAMIC PROCESS OF RELATIONSHIP

When persons are deprived not only of goods and possessions and the material, spiritual, moral, intellectual, cultural, or sociological order, but of everything that make up the foundation of their being-in-the-world and the specificity of their 'personality' as individual, society, and history – when persons are bereft of their identity, their dignity, their freedom, their thought, their history, their language, their faith universe, and their basic creativity, deprived of all their rights, their hopes, their ambitions (that is, when they are robbed of their own ways of living and existing) – they sink into a kind of poverty which no longer concerns only exterior or interior goods or possessions but strikes at the very being, essence, and dignity of their human persons. It is this poverty that we call anthropological poverty. This is an indigence of being, the legacy of centuries of slavery and colonization.¹

The above quotation is very fundamental on our problem of observation as we shall see later. In this chapter, we shall present the dynamism as researched and experienced by the writer. It aims at giving us the synoptic overview of the existing nature of pastoral collaboration within our context. The basis of collaboration or dialogue is multifaceted. To present a clear understanding of the problem of collaboration in this context, we have decided to show the organs of the ministries and their relationships within the dioceses of Igboland under three levels: diocesan, parish and seminary. In a diocese, we have a bishop in charge, in a parish, a pastor is in-charge, and in a seminary, we have a rector. It is important to note that in these levels of presentation, there is no strict compartment as they operate in close fusion relationship within the dioceses. By this I mean that parishes and seminaries exist and correlate as part of a diocesan structure; but our subdivisions will help to make clearer the observation of collaboration in each of these sectors. Before presenting the nature of the problems, we shall first show the sketch of the dynamism.

1 E. Mveng, quoted in E.E. Uzukwu, "*African Inculturation Theology: Path of Liberation*", talk in K.U. Leaven, Faculty of Theology, 5 September 2001.



1. Diocesan organic collaboration in Igboland

The dynamism of a local diocese as operates in Igboland is presented with a bishop as the chief shepherd. Within it we have the priests and the laity who work as members of the diocese. Structurally, we have the “Diocesan Laity Council” and the “The Presbyterian Council” (Senate Council). There are other organs, but these, as mentioned, accommodate both the clergy and the laity respectively. We shall present these views under, (1) the diocesan structural dynamic organs, after which, we will plunge into (2) a local bishop in collaboration with the laity, and (3) with the priests serving within his local diocese. As our discussion has to do with mission activities, we will also make observation on the (4) dialogue of culture and the Gospel message in relation to the spirit of collaboration, being guided by the information acquired during the interview discussions.

1.1 The dynamic structural organs of collaboration

The dynamic structural organs of a diocese in Igboland will be treated under the following subheadings: (1) diocesan laity council and its objectives, (2) Presbyterian council and (3) societal politics that consciously or unconsciously influence some of the actions of our agents of evangelization. The actors in these sectors operate in chain connections with other systems, parishes and seminaries.

1.1.1 Diocesan laity council

Before the laity communal participation in the activities of the Church, they started initially as individual helpers to the early missionaries wherever the latter were established as interpreters, mission boys, catechists, etc. With time, the lay people started to form certain group apostolates within their local areas such as Legion of Mary, different religious societies after the names of the saints (Sts. Jude and Anthony, etc.), Block Rosary centres, Christian Men and Women organizations, Knights of St. Columbus and St. John, Catholic Youth Society, etc. Gradually the lay people came to establish Diocesan Laity Council being guided by the teachings of Vatican II through the documents of *Lumen Gentium* and *Ad Gentes* (concerning the collaboration between the laity and the hierarchy). This organization became so popular both at the diocesan and at the national levels as they help to build up the Church. The local Bishops have high financial expectations from this society in their dioceses.

In its constitution, the Diocesan Laity Council is defined as: a “National Council for the Apostolate of the Laity in Nigeria”, which is called “The Catholic Laity Council of Nigeria” at a national level. The Council is regarded as the “Supreme Central Laity Organization” of the entire members of the Catholic Church in Nigeria. For the avoidance of doubt, the phrase Catholic Laity of Nigeria means: “All Christ’s faithful except those in Holy Orders and those in Religious Orders sanctioned by the Church”.

Aims & Objectives

In principle, this organization (The Laity Council) is charged with the responsibility to advance Catholic interests within and beyond. Its main outstanding functions are as follows in accordance with the Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People of the Vatican Council II and the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*:

- To promote the moral, social and intellectual improvement of the Catholics at local and national levels;
- To foster a true Catholic spirit and balance the good relationship among the Bishops, priests and members of the faithful; to encourage the study of Catholic history, doctrine and science; collaboration with the Nigerian hierarchy;

- By frequent and internal interaction to bind the members more closely in pursuit of the interest of the Church within their parishes and dioceses;
- To serve as an organ to safeguard the interest of the Catholics of the district as a whole. It is important to note here that the collective representative members of various dioceses make up the National Laity Council and their leaders do not find it easy with their local Bishops as we shall see later.

1.1.2 The Presbyterian/Senate Council

The Senate Council is a formal meeting that involves a diocesan bishop along with the priests who work in the diocese as parish priests, lecturers, organizers of pastoral centers, etc. They meet occasionally to discuss the affairs of the Church as they affect the dioceses and other pertinent issues as well. Local bishop presides over the Presbyterian Council. Depending on a diocese – for some, priests are always eager to have these types of Senate meetings as they serve as good opportunities for them to interact with their fellow priests and the local ordinary, while for others, the contrary is the case. Some Bishops are described as being “constant as a northern star” in the way they hold their opinion decisions contrary to the views of their priests, especially when danger is lurking on the air. Such matters that affect dioceses, for instance, as some politicians of certain parties may love to use the Church as an easy means for the presentation of their political manifestos, under the auspices of being known to the authority in charge, are regarded as sensitive issues religious leaders could be extra careful in compromising with in any way. However, in some areas, some Bishops are really at home with their priests, while some are not. It is also alleged that the nature of politics in Nigerian do affect, to some extent, the religious administration of some of our leaders, who may or may not be conscious of it.

1.1.3. Societal politics

Politics in Nigeria is nothing to write home about – ethnic groups and class distinctions are getting wider and wider, even in the midst of oil wealth. It is only those who spin the

wheel of political power and those in the helm of affairs can feed well with oil money, while the rest of the people, the lesser class are left in misery, penury and deprivation. Unequal power relations do breed an inequitable structural allocation of resources among different groups in the society and differential access to power through the political process. Thus, this distorting system of distribution of the nation's wealth has resulted to the "enrichment of a minority at the expense of an impoverished majority of the people" who have nobody to speak for them.

Kayoda Fayemi sees this structural injustice as one of the fundamental factors that help to perpetuate the chronic nature of poverty in Nigeria due to the continuing system of mismanagement of the general resources, persistent institutional uncertainty, weak rule of law, decrepit and/or absent infrastructural facilities, weak institutions of state, and monumental corruption. He then attribute this central depth of poverty to poor governance at all levels in the nation's political system. It is not surprising that in the government administration (both at the States and the Federal levels), there exist the problems of instability, fluctuation, monopoly of power and improper operation and accountability. There is the danger that such nature of politics could have some influence in the operational system of some of the religious leaders, especially on the use of power.

1.2 Bishops-laity collaboration

Following the evaluation of some of our informants, Igbo Bishops are hard working due to the challenging nature of their shepherdship in the respective dioceses. Nevertheless, there are lots of observations to the contrary. I just picked few to present here and many other remarks are similar. We have such observation that some of our religious leaders in dioceses do feel as if the "fate of the priests and the diocesan members are in their hands". A lay Church official pointed out: "Any subordinate that is not a 'yes member my lord' type, and tries to argue his point through is inviting trouble". Another source has thus: "it is amazing to realize that some of our Bishops in Igboland operate as '*demi-gods*' who must be worshipped and any person who does not see and regard them that way, will be written off in their good record books. ". Moreover, "hardly do they give functions to the lay people and accord them the full responsibility, encouragement and liberty to exercise their

initiatives, judgments and sense of commitments without arbitrary interventions” one commented. When asked whether all the Bishops in Igboland behave in the same way? The response varies: some answered “No” while some maintained that “our Bishops change immediately they are given the mantle”. Others see it as “an administrative strategy for stability”. Perhaps, “this is because their pastoral positions are stable and permanently assured”. Actually, these types of situation are challenging in view of the modern evangelization as the lay people are beginning to distinguish themselves in the activities of the Church, coupled with high quality of education they are acquiring.

Our problem in view of the above lies in the perilous challenges facing Christianity today in terms of fruitful collaborative ministry as it affects relationships between clergy and laity in Igboland of Nigeria in particular and Africa in general. Superficially, one would feel that everything is okay within the internal system of ecclesia in Igboland, but a careful observation will immediately discover the existing conflicts among the clergy and also between the clergy and the laity within our dioceses. It is not by mistake that African Churches are now trying to be cautious, among other things, to correct the impression of the spirit of clericalism that extols the role of the clergy as the active dominant entity in the Church and the lay people playing the passive, subservient masses. At this present period, forms of Christian local communities are drastically changing. The old forms are gradually being reviewed in consonant with the current structure of ecclesiology since the Council of Vatican II, while the new ones are springing up. These new forms bring new ways of conceiving and exercising power and authority, with corresponding new structures and new ways of being Church. This situation affects the activities of the agents of evangelization: laity and clergy respectively.

In some situations, among the laity, the functional ones who dedicated themselves to serve freely find it difficult as leaders without ‘portfolio’, to operate in dioceses where they cannot function effectively without much infringement. The reason is that some influential personalities within the diocese do intervene to determine the course of activities and decisions with less regard for the personality and the professional function of the lay apostolate working with them. This is a situation where some workers in the diocesan chanceries are regarded as mere instruments of utilization and service, significant only as a

mere object to accomplish an authority-assertion-power. This is evident of a situation where human beings are not respected but treated like instrumental objects meant to get the work done. A situation where one man's opinion prevails always at the expense of others as he hardly trusts other members to be competent enough to undertake any substantial task on their own. Rather, the authority in power will like to generate on these other workers, the sense of lack of confidence in themselves and their least desire to carry out any task effectively. This type of situation results occasionally to conflict and tension as collaboration is lacking even at its structural level among the clergy and the laity.

As we shall see later, the Western European Church structures (from 1900-1970) were being transplanted intact in Africa and with it, they had their remarkable effects in the local ecclesia and life-style as we have it in Igboland of Nigeria. This is to the extent that missionary successors, chosen and appointed by their predecessors, continued the same strategy of shepherding the flock. Thus, "having been schooled in prudential compliance to authority and tradition, they tend to lack initiative. The reason is that the Church leaders who operated in the feudalistic institutions were much concerned with power and authority"². In our context, it appears that this inherited Pre-Vatican II feudal image of the use of authority and power in the Church constitutes even today the greatest obstacle to the emergence of dynamic local Churches. However, the Second Vatican Council broke through this authority-conscious model of Church and projected an image of the Church as People of God, where each member is called to holiness and to participate fully in the life of the Church; ministry is exercised for the good of the body of Christ. This vision of the Church encouraged local Churches to respond to local needs³. But, the problem still exists among the agents of evangelization who find it difficult to work as a team.

Thus, the crux of the problem remains that unquestionable authority is still vested in the hands of the hierarchy who have been directing the pace and determining the line of action for the laity right from the period of the early missionaries. By the virtue of their

2 E. E. Uzukwu, "*The birth and Development of a Local Church: difficulties and signs of hope*" in Maura Brown (ed.), *The African Synod, Document, Reflections, Perspectives*, Maryknoll (NY), Orbis Books, 1996.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 1.

participation in the ecclesiastical common priesthood of Christ, the lay people are free to collaborate effectively in the pastoral ministry of clerics in parishes, health care centres, charitable and educational institutions, prisons, etc., as covered by Canon 517, § 2. Even, the emphasis of *Lumen Gentium* and *Ad Gentes* on the role of the “laity working along with the hierarchy” has not been fully considered in matters of function in some dioceses among the Igbos⁴. In principle, one may say yes, they are given functions, but the issue is: what activities and to what extent are they given the freedom to execute and to discharge their duties?

It is important to note that such functions that demand expertise, laymen can be elected to handle them in a diocese where there is collaboration. For instance, functions like “chancellorship”, Council for the diocesan “economic affairs”, “diocesan bursar”, etc., lay people can conveniently handle them well as more experienced experts than some of the priests who, perhaps, may not be specialists in these fields. But still, the laymen are looked upon as “ill-informed” or “incapable of being trusted” with duties. In some cases, “there is lack of clarity in office assignments, work definitions, poor delegation, responsibility without authority and a feeling of distrust and threat, arbitrary changing and unannounced work dismissal of lay mission workers”, said the chairman of the laity in one of our dioceses. Yet, in the important situation of building up the Church to be fully functional and alive, the “*powers that be*” have neglected to identify or to use many of the appropriate tools available to them.

At times, when lay people try to insist, there is “overlapping of power” between their leaders and their clerical brothers, especially where there is an undue intervention or directive that reduces the former to mere functionalism – he becomes an ordinary stooge to be manipulated⁵ - many end up being frustrated and depressed. One national laity leader once told me, after narrating his experience with a diocesan laity coordinator: “Father, to be frank with you, all my enthusiasm to work for God is gone”. What a frustrating situation! There is perhaps, lack of incentive from some of our spiritual leaders.

4 Cf. B. Maura, (ed.), *Op. cit.*, p. 2.

5 Cf. E. Onuoha, “*Inculturation of Church Authority in Igboland*”, in A.N.O. Ekwunife (ed.), *Renewal of Priestly Life and Ministry: The Nigerian Experience*, Nigeria-Enugu: Snaap Press Ltd, 1995, pp. 302-331.

It has been our wrong conception that when we think of authority, our minds go immediately to power that controls or enslaves people through rules and laws as exercised by the government or law enforcement agents, like the police. Under this condition, the government or its agents can impose their wishes on those they rule and force them to obey. It is important to understand that there is a clear distinction between authority and power. Power, force, coercion is the ability to impose one's will on another, contrary to the will of the other, or acting without reference, consultation or seeking opinion of the other. In most cases, this type of power could be influenced by external forces like one's position, command of financial influence (wealth), ego-centeredness, etc.

On the other hand, authority addresses itself to man's reason and freedom; it appeals by persuasive collaboration or dialogue and never by coerce or imposition or direct attack on one's personality. It appeals to the free assent and willingness of the other person and persuasively arrives at a mutual compromise. Authority in the Church begins where it is freely recognized and ends where it becomes self-imposing power, thus giving rise to dictatorship. Authority has an inner motivation and is being guided by the person's conscience. It does not compel in the sense of power imposition or force; rather, it appeals to the moral element of man and can be exercised in so far as the subjects are capable of moral actions as it is always at the service of others and their freedom⁶. The authority of Christ himself, and therefore, of all who share in it, is an authority only for the sake of service, love and understanding, in conformity to the will of God. It is an empowered type of authority that comes from God Himself. When God sent Moses to confront Pharaoh, He promised inspiring him (determining his speech) so that he will act in His name, in the authority of God. It is the responsibility of an authority to wash the feet of the disciples; an authority to care for others, to unite and reconcile all men, to consider their interests and feelings; and an authority to give his life as a ransom for many⁷.

⁶ Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 302-331.

⁷ E. Hill, Ministry and Authority in the Catholic Church, London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1988, pp. 11-12.

Nevertheless, the inappropriate use of authority notwithstanding, I must not fail to mention that in certain situations, some lay people may tend to overstep their boundaries. Some of the enlightened ones among them go to the extent of dictating for their local ordinary the nature of priest they would like to be sent to them. Instances abound where “some, among the laity, were looking down on the young priests sent to work with them, as they felt that they were immature to function in their parishes, not minding the capability of the priests in question”, as pointed out by some of our priests. This uncalled for attitude may end up frustrating the priests sent to work among his brothers and sisters in Christ. On one occasion, I was called upon to intervene in a parish where a pastor was driven out of the rectory by lay parishioners (organized members of the parish Council) who invited the police to help them execute their consensus plight. This happened because the pastor refused to veto the decision of the parish Council on the issue of a Church building without enough realizable funds to begin. The priest, who was serving in a remote village, suggested that the father’s house be renovated instead. Generally, as far as Igboland is concerned, before the laity could go to such length, they must have calculated the priest’s obstinacy and non-collaborative manner for a period of time and in a good number of issues. Their feelings were that he was not using their fund judiciously.

1.3 Local bishop and his priests

There are many priests, especially older ones who have fairly good relationship with their Bishops in Nigeria. But from my interview with some priests, there is a good number who maintains that in their diocese there is no genuine communion embracing the whole clerical community...There is a painful distance between Bishops and their priests...In fact, concrete cases of tension between Bishops and priests are often fundamentally institutional. Because this kind of tension is in its root institutional both Bishops and priests who may be excellent human beings, may continue to suffer under this unfortunate tension. Tension between Bishop and priests is noticeable in various aspects of the Churches ministry and administration in Nigeria.

They relate to their priests by correspondence and would like every matter to follow the official protocol. They are authoritarians by correspondence and will rarely consult their priests before taking action on matters that affect them. Even when they consult them, some Bishops have such feudal mentality which makes them listen to

priests only for formality but to take decision of their own as if they had not heard the priests⁸.

As observed, the issue is not only with the laity, but even among the clergymen themselves, the same poor condition of collaboration does exist. J.P.C. Nzomiwu presents the above quotation as part of his research finding on the existing relationship between some of our Bishops and their priests. He mentioned some crucial areas that “deter genuine hierarchical communion” such as “Bureaucratic Exercise of Authority”, “Continuation of Education”, “Postings and Transfers”, etc. On bureaucracy and authority, he has this to say: “In some diocese, the bishop is not available to the priests. He cannot easily be reached by the clergy. He is not a brother interested in the affairs of the priests and the people of God but an *autocrat* who can hardly be reached except on his official days”. Commenting on education, he mentioned that some priests do accuse their Bishops of “nepotism or favouritism” for delaying to send them for further studies. J. Nzomiwu also related the same nature of accusations to the issues of posting and transfers, when he noted: “There is usually mistrust, distance and monologue between the bishop and priests who have been posted to non-viable parishes. This is another area of the pastoral life where the bishop is accused of favouritism”⁹.

As presented above, in some dioceses, there exists mistrust, distance, monologue and neglect between Bishops/or Religious Superiors and their priests, “especially the ones who claim that they have been posted to non-viable parishes just to punish them. This is another area of the pastoral life where the bishop/Superior is accused of lacking in charity”¹⁰. Unlike in some parts of Europe and North America where the priests are paid because there is a centralized system of clergy support, in the context we are discussing such a remuneration system is lacking. Priests are rather maintained and catered for by the parishioners where they are posted to work. Those serving in urban areas are said to be better off, in terms of needs. This is a situation where perhaps, a priest feels that his bishop is using transfer as a

8 J.P.C. Nzomiwu, “*Relationship between Bishops and Priest*” in A.N.O. Ekwunife (ed.) Renewal of Priestly Life and Ministry: The Nigerian Experience, Nigeria-Enugu: Snaap Press Ltd., 1995, p. 289

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 291-292.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p 292.

punitive measure, which in some cases, could be true or false. True, in the sense that some priests have their historical stories to tell with regard to their ugly relationships with their particular Bishops. But, false in the sense that such a situation does not necessarily apply in every case. I have worked in a diocese where such people were posted to remote and of course, difficult places, not for any other reason, than for the recognition of their hard work, as they used to work up parishes assigned to them. However, these are exceptional cases, as enough explanations are normally given to such priests before transferring them to new, but hard parishes and at times these are done with some encouraging compensations at the end. In actual fact, many who conclude negatively do so after prolonged observations of their relationship with their Bishops or Provincial Superiors as some made me understand.

As observed, some parish priests complain that there is a lot of distancing between them and their Bishops or Provincial Superiors and the only relationship that exists between them is juridicial, formal, superficial and often limited to financial matters and duty assignments¹¹. There is no gainsaying the fact that in some situations, the relationship that exists between the local Bishops or the Superiors and their priests is strained, lacking the spirit of collaboration or fruitful dialogue. This is true in some dioceses, where Bishops and their priests “operate like cats and dogs” as they rarely end their Senate meetings amicably without frictions and misunderstanding. In his diocese, one of my informants told me that the priests, in Presbyterian Council tried their best to convince their bishop to give up his standpoint in an issue that raised dust in a diocese. The bishop, seeing that the pressure was too much for him to bear, ended the discussion by telling the priests that they were free to argue till any length of time, but he was the person to make the final decision and that he would not go back in his decision on the issue. This means that his words were final whether he was right or wrong in the position he held, he would still maintain his opinion. The Senate ended with an uncompromising statement from the diocesan spiritual leader. In many situations, such is always the case, where the “EGO” has to be projected at all cost at the expense of the reality or the common good. This is not necessary from the higher leaders, even among the priests.

11 *Ibid*, p. 292.

We also have issues of conflict between some local Bishops and the Religious Provincial Superiors on matters of pastoral assignment. J. Aniagwu writes: “On one hand, diocesan clergymen have often considered the particular diocese as theirs, and the religious working in it as helpers. The later should help only to the extent that the owner allows them”¹². With this mentality, “the Bishops in many dioceses capitalize on this and dismiss the male religious at will when the latter have helped in working up and developing the parishes assigned to them on long term bases”, presented by a confrere. “The agonizing part of it”, he continued, “is that these are the nature of parishes some local diocesan clergy will not love to work in, due to how remote and unviable they are before the religious would be approached to handle them”. Eventually, “when they are worked up and developed, they will be taken away from them and reassigned to the diocesan clergy with little or no compensation”, he concluded. In some situations, such issues do generate some misunderstanding between the local ordinary and the Provincial Superiors who would see it as injustice and unfair. However, there are exceptional dioceses where the Bishops maintain their initial mutual agreement with the Religious Provincial Leaders without problem, but these are few in number.

1.4 Dialogue between culture and christianity

It must be stressed, however that the negation and mistreatment of the fellow human beings as presented is not only something of the past, but is still the case today in our practiced colonial ecclesiology that does not take the culture seriously. Human culture is the ground in which people’s roots of personal, social and communal existence and relationship are planted. What is involved in the clergy-clergy conflicts as presented is the poor application of the cultural life of the people which is the essence of their communal life existence. There is no doubt that poor collaboration has to do with the nature of the existing Christianity that neglected the cultural life of the people and imposed foreign one in the nature of evangelization. The general view of traditional culture of the Igbos and the Christian faith they embraced could be spelt out more in this quotation that is given by

12 J. Aniagwu, Collaboration Ministry – Priests, Sisters and Brothers, Nigeria: Daily Graphics Press Ltd., 2001, p. 20.

Ernest Ezeogu when discussing culture and Christianity (use of bible in evangelization) in Igboland:

According to the dialectic model, the gospel and culture are opposed to each other, in perpetual conflict with each other, and are ultimately irreconcilable. This polarity is often expressed in the language of contrasting spatial, temporal, and circumstantial metaphors, such as these: the gospel is from "above," culture from "below"; the gospel is "divine," culture "human"; the gospel is "light," culture "darkness"; the gospel is "eternal," culture "time-bound"; and so on. According to the advocates of this view, the dichotomy between the gospel and culture can be resolved in only one possible way, by culture yielding to the demands of the gospel¹³.

The dialectic conception of René Descartes (1596 -1650), a renowned modern philosopher who searched for a reliable knowledge of self-existence in relation to the creator, God and the physical world, the created, is totally different from what Ezeogu presented in the quotation. Descartes' principle of dialectics projects the ability to integrate the supposedly two different views to a higher outcome, the synthesis. In the quoted view, the reverse is the case; the dialectic perspective shows that Christian method of evangelization moved in a different dimension from the traditional cultural life of the people. The conception was that the traditional people had no established religion of their own, rather, what they practiced was fetish oriented type that permitted slavery, killing of twins, and etc. Moreover, the practice of polygamy, ancestral veneration and divine worship through intermediaries (earth, sky, etc) could not be understood by the missionaries who had the background of monogamy, veneration of the saints and worship of one true God.

In view of these cultural and religious incompatibilities, the missionaries who could not "distinguish between their home cultural practices and the Christian faith were intolerant of unfamiliar customs of the Igbos, they encountered"¹⁴. Thus, they resorted to begin their evangelization in a neutral ground totally disassociated from the culture of the people by establishing Christian communities outside the circumscription of the native people. In practice, the missionary strategy, according to Ezeogu Munich, "emphasized not dialogue

13 E.M. Ezeogu, *"African Theology – Bible and Culture in African Christianity"*. Website coverage publication, (www.munachi.com), 2006.

14 G. Ehusani, (current Secretary), *"The Catholic Church in Nigeria – a brief history"* presented by the Catholic Secretariat, Lagos, 2005 , Website: www.cbcn.org; E-mail: [REDACTED] Abs.net.

but authority, not love but power” to silence the traditional voices to the contrary. Rev. Ezeogu holds that attitude of the early evangelizers was in “keeping with the missionaries' self understanding as soldiers of Christ”, whose supremacy supersedes that of the natives. The contrast of this is the collaborative or the dialogic model of evangelization which “views culture and gospel as two compatible entities that could be reconciled”. This is where Descartes dialectical reasoning works as a potentially useful framework that could have helped the missionaries to resolve the paradox of the encounter of native culture and Christianity without having to subdue any. By its nature, this process operates in symbiotic process of give and take through dialogue as we shall see later. Unfortunately, this type of approach was being neglected by the early evangelizers, hence, the view that the encountered culture is diabolic or something associated with evil of darkness.

The problem of collaboration as discussed above is traceable to the poor dialogue agreement that should exist between the culture of the people and the Christianity they received. Our central discussion above with reference to poor collaboration is the European Church structure that was being transplanted intact in Nigeria without much consideration to her culture.

Suffice it to say that “Christianity in Nigerian-Igbo culture seems to have created additional tensions for the Igbo man”¹⁵ and his culture that reflected not only in the collaborative relationship among the evangelizers, but also on the seminary formation of future missionaries. Following the style of evangelization, Christian faith did not pass through the culture of the people. We shall see more of this when we consider the process of the early missionary evangelization. Culture is seen as all those factors by which man refines and unfolds his manifold spiritual and bodily qualities. It is really a symbolic system constructed by people to make their life and society meaningful. It dictates people's life style; any communal function that is totally divorced of people's way of life, will hardly survive or sustain the group successfully. The spirit of poor collaboration is said to be pronounced between the clergy and the laity because it lacks the people's cultural way of community living.

15 B.C. Okoro, The Igbo Church and Quest for God, Nigeria: Pacific College Press Ltd., 1985, p. 43.

The interaction between the culture of the people and the new religion that they embraced resulted to a new orientation of life. The new religion gave a new meaning, a new definition of the symbols and the structures of the culture and the traditional religious practices of the people before Christianity. In the process, traditional language was minimally adopted to some extent (catechists were using it for interpretation) as a means of communication, while others were weakened or in some situations totally dropped and discouraged. For instance, the practice of the veneration of the ancestors was conceived as evil and a practice of idolatry by the evangelizers and, discouraged while monogamy was introduced in place of polygamy. More particularly, the traditional systems of administration in terms of leadership role and the “*umunna communal spirit*” of collaboration were all suppressed, given way to European authoritarian and individualistic ways of living and playing leadership role. The problem here is cultural conflict as the traditional process of being people was being neglected. These values stem from the great love the Igbo people have for their family lives. The continual ancestral union accounts for the strong community spirit among the Igbos that gives way for collaborative life.

As the early converts were taken out of their cultural background into new established village communities and given a new orientation of life totally different from their former lives, for the people, it was a cultural alienation instead of seeing it as a way of submitting themselves to the ethics of Christ and to the new life. The original culture of the people before the advent of Christianity was not in effect eradicated by the new religion, but merely suppressed to give way to the demands of the new faith, Christianity. Thus, in spite of many years of Christianity, many still hold tenaciously to the traditional pattern of life and religious practices. For them, this traditional pattern of life where they feel at home in their environment, an opportunity denied in Christian belief, provides the most reliable design for living as it gives harmony, protection, security and meaning to their being. Such is a Nigerian-Igbo man’s mentality for which Christianity is not yet seen as a satisfactory substitute.

Following the numerical strength of Christians in Igboland, for instance, and the nature of evangelization, one has the impression that the “main goal of the early evangelizers was the conversion of the greatest possible number of individuals and their incorporation into

the new community of the faithful” my informant stressed. The success of this process was evaluated in terms of “numerical Church growth”. The emphasis of which was the “humanization of society, the eradication of social ills, the provision of education to foster evangelization”¹⁶, healing of social welfare, etc. However, these were successes in their perspectives as the aim was to plant or to sow the faith. They fared well with the people who were obeying every injunction without complaining. Today, the lay people are now enlightened and the missionary process of these days are “based more on communal ecclesia instead of traditional spirit of clericalism” that had prevailed in the past. Moreover, the first phase of evangelization poses a challenge for the second phase that is no longer on the level of planting, but on the level of incarnation/root-taking of Christ’s given message to be preached through people’s cultural values without much power imposition. The challenge, as visualised here, demands collaborative spirit as against authoritarian Pre-Vatican way of being Church.

In the above observations, we have seen the poor dialogue relationship between the Gospel message and the culture of the people. We also presented a poor situation of collaboration existing between priests and their Bishops in some of our dioceses as the latter continue to exercise their authority over the former. We also have a situation where the parish pastor is incharge working with the newly ordained priest(s) and lay people.

2. Parish, under a diocese, with a priest as the pastor

A society’s culture is like a passage, which has become the “*Locus Classicus*” of the whole movement which consists of whatever exists that has to be known or believed in order to operate in a manner accepted to its members. The falsification of a culture is tantamount to the alienation of its members because culture makes people what they are; and people put into practice what they have learnt as they relate with others, bearing their backgrounds in mind. This, no doubt, has its repercussions on human relationship, as no two persons are the same and charismas differ also. We shall continue our observation in Igbo parish by considering the following relationships in view of the existing collaboration: (1),

16 From the interview discussions, Year 2003.

where two or more priests live together, (2) parish priest and the parish Council, (3) parish priest and the parishioners, (4) parish priest and the youths, and (5) parish priest and the mission worker.

2.1. Between two priests

Conflict-tension among these role actors could be assumed to derive from the dispense of these two independent variables of *authoritative* and *personal power*. Even starting from the first time the new assistant arrives, he may be officially introduced to the parishioners by the parish priest in one of the first Sunday Masses he may celebrate with him. The introduction of the newly arrived may be laced with '*I hope you will accept this young inexperienced priest who is sent to work under me in my parish?*' Of course with every probability, the 'young inexperienced priest' may not even be given a chance to read one of the readings, so that he would not be heard but seen on the altar.

In the rectory, both *may not sit down together to discuss the work to be done* and the situation of things in the parish. The 'young inexperienced priest' may likely be told late on Saturday evening or early Sunday morning where he should go for Sunday Masses¹⁷.

In our observations, we have situations where in the parish rectory, two priests are posted to work collaboratively as they serve the people of God. Normally, the parish priest, in an effort to exercise his leadership role, should understand that his actions have to be carried out in such a way as to enhance the spirit of collaboration. He will aim at influencing a healthy relationship between him and his fellow priest sent to work with him as they depend upon each other for the attainment of mutual goals. While "this is the case with some, for many, in practice, the reverse is the case" as presented above. Instead, "we have conflict, tension and hostility, a situation where the associate pastor is rarely consulted on matters of importance that has to do with parish work". These are such things like "nature of projects to be carried out, number of masses to be said" when and where, meeting with the parish Councils, men and women organizations, etc. As seen above, a young priest may likely be told late on Saturday evening or early Sunday morning where he is needed for mass just to make sure he does not perform more than the pastor, and perhaps, win the favour of the parishioners, the pastor may think.

¹⁷ C.E. Eleke, "*Leadership Role of the Priest in the Parish*", in A.N.O. Ekwunife, Op. cit., pp. 304-305.

Father C. Eleke observed that the associate pastor, under such a situation, might not be invited to attend or represent the pastor in any meeting with the parishioners or even to be invited to hold offices, least, he proves himself as some people deride challenges. This will then mean that the parochial vicar may be “waiting and waiting in expectation” for him to have an audience, to dialogue on pertinent issues with the pastor, to no avail. At least, through this way, he could “contribute his little ‘experienced’ ideas about where he is being weekly sent at a last minute’s notice, but this may not materialize”¹⁸ as the pastor will see the young priest as a rivalry. Hence, the associate will begin to feel left out in the decisions concerning the parish tasks to be carried out. “The ugly issue is that the pastor occasionally takes a singular-minded decision by asserting his power”¹⁹ and will be expecting his ‘subordinate’ to implement his projected decisions’, even if they militate against his (associate’s) own thought, without question. This is a “military type of authority and obedience”, and failing to do so, he would be “branded as an obstinate and fastidious fellow” that finds it hard to work in a community or with others. In carrying out any of these functions, “he may not be left to take initiative as to devise means of how to work out certain minimal matters on his own”²⁰.

There have been many cases of this nature not only in Igboland, but also in other parts of Nigeria and even in some African countries, as I was made to understand when I discussed with some of my fellow priests from other countries on the same issue in Europe, US and Canada. I have had the same experience both in Nigeria and in US respectively. Professor Anthony Ekwunife CSSp, (an Igbo theologian) writing on “*The Image of the Priest in the Contemporary Africa, the Nigerian Connection*”, has this to say:

The urgency of the reflections in this paper could only be fully appreciated by one quite conversant with events touching the image of priests in Nigerian contexts in recent times. Some of these events often involve the relationship among priests themselves or between them and their Bishops or religious Superiors. At times, they touch their relationship with either the Christian communities or the society at large²¹.

18 . *Ibid.*, pp. 304-305.

19 *Ibid.*, pp. 304-305.

20 *Ibid.*, pp. 304-305.

21 A.O. Ekwunife, CSSp, “*The Image of the Priest in the Contemporary Africa, The Nigerian Connection*”, in L. Mbefo and Ernest M. Ezeogu (eds.), *The Clergy in Nigeria Today* [SISI

A. Ekwunife presents the reason for the conflicts as the “Catholic inherited traditional image of unlimited clerical power ‘*plenitudo*’²². For the two priests in a parish, under such situations, the associate pastor, according to C.E. Eleke, “will start to reflect on his state of aimlessness and utter disregard from his boss”²³, the pastor. This is because he (the pastor) would not allow his associate, in most cases, to contribute to decision making and even to feel free to interact with the parishioners as he (the boss) sees the parish as his own and the young associate pastor posted to him as perhaps, an intruder, who has come to rob him of his influence and authority in his “established kingdom”. Such an ugly situation may reach to the extent that in the rectory, “both may not sit down together to discuss their mission experiences”. Thus, should the young priest try to find solace outside the rectory, perhaps with some members of the parish who might have identified with his style of life, or some of his abilities and come regularly to interact with him, this may earn him before the parish Pastor, “feelings of hostility”, according to reverend Dr. Cletus Eze Eleke.

Generally, Professor Ekwunife, who happened to be one of those I interviewed for this thesis, presented further sampled concrete instances of the events of poor collaborative relationships that exist in different dioceses in Igboland of Nigeria, limiting his period from 1980 to the present time. In these dioceses, he presented detailed conflict incidents that took place at different periods among the priests and between them and their local Bishops, Superiors and parishioners. These dioceses include the following: for Archdiocese of Owerri, he mentioned serious misunderstanding between two priests which constituted a scandal before the parishioners who witnessed the scene immediately after mass; for Orlu diocese, he presented the issue where Catholic parishioners dragged the parish priest to court after a long scuffle with him; for Archdiocese of Onitsha, he mentioned the incidents that took place in Aguleri, Umuoji, Otolo Nnewi and Fegge parishes; in Enugu diocese, he mentioned the Achi parish case that had lingered for many years; in Nsukka diocese, he

Symposium Series No. 3], Nigeria-Enugu: Snaap Press, pp. 140-175. By the term “priest” in Igboland as presented in this quotation, A. Ekwunife made us understand that it “applies primarily to the category of the ordained clergy-men within the Roman Catholic communion in their various ranks –Bishops, Monsignors and priests.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 145.

²³ C.E. Eleke, *Op. cit.*, p. 255.

mentioned the “*Odo*” crises of Aku parish and “Akatakpa/Omaba” crisis of Isienu parish, as concrete examples. Our main point here is to show that in actuality, there are lots of existential conflicting issues of poor collaboration among the agents of evangelization in Igboland, our area of concentration. This is the crux of the problem where two priests living in a house do not agree. This type of situation used to result to frictions whereby the relationship that should exist between the priests or between the clergy and the laity becomes polarised and tension-mounted. Instead of being a community of confrere priests who, like the Apostles, have chosen to respond to Christ's call to humble life of service and sacrificial love in their public and private lives, they turn to live as “cats and dogs”. In some cases, this type of situation leads to the division of the parish into two camps of factional interest. The parish Pastor resorts to influence his house holders and majority of the parishioners who are on in his camp, as he is in command; while the associate pastor on the other hand, may draw some of his external friends into his “own compassionate effect”.

However, it is important to note that some of the newly ordained priests are also stubborn with their pastors when posted to work in a parish with their well experienced brother priests. They would love to brag themselves as “current theologians who know better” as they regard the older ones as “out-modelled”. Following my dialogue with the young and the old priests, I discovered that the issue is a two-way traffic. What this means is that in some areas, the elder priests who work with the younger priests tend to be severe with them and this depends, of course, on individuals as there are many good ones. In some parishes, however, at times, the problem comes from the newly ordained who tend to be stubborn and to “incline more to worldly material things with vision of wondrous anticipation” that occasionally put them at loggerheads with their pastors, who perhaps, love living simply. The parish pastor may interpret this gesture as an “intrusion and encroachment into not only on his self-image, self-esteem and status, but also on his vision of mission apostolate”²⁴.

In a situation of this nature, the spirit of community trust or true communication will be lacking. When this sets in, a benevolent act may not necessarily be perceived with trust and

²⁴ *Ibid.*

a conciliatory act will be received with mixed feelings. It may be “viewed with suspicion, as it will be assumed that there must be an ulterior motive behind the benevolent and conciliatory act”²⁵. In such situations, collaboration will be absolutely impossible in practice and consequently, parish work suffers and this affects the parishioners. For Aleke, the “household members and the parishioners may then become the unfortunate targets of aggressive acts. This follows the Igbo adage that when two elephants fight, it is the grass that suffers”²⁶ most.

2.2 Parish priest and the parish council

One of the major problems of the laity and the Laity Council is that the competent ecclesiastical authority, which in this case is the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria (CBCN), has allowed the establishment of the laity Council of Nigeria but some priests are not co-operating with the laity to establish the Council at parish level. This is frustrating the lay people especially the national, provincial and diocesan officers of the Council who are doing everything possible to see that the Council is established in every parish in Nigeria²⁷.

Chief D. Dodo, presenting a paper, from where the above quotation is lifted, at the third SIST²⁸ Symposium that was centred on the “The Clergy in Nigeria Today”, states:

In view of my present position as the National Chairman of the Laity Council of Nigeria and the previous positions I held in the Council since 1976 as the Diocesan Secretary, Provincial Secretary, Secretary General and National Executive Secretary...we have issues and problems of clergy-laity relationship in the Church²⁹.

For Chief D. Dodo, the power of governance reposed to the clergy has made “some priests to be *dictatorial*” which “frustrates the laity Council officers”, especially when realizing that the “lay faithful constitute 99% of the Church members” and still the “power of governance is entrusted not to the group (the laity) that forms the majority, but to the

25 B. Kuppaswamy, Elements of Social Psychology, New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House PVT-Ltd., 1973, p. 68.

26 C.E. Eleke, *Op. cit.*, p. 257.

27 D. Dodo (Former National Laity Council Chairman), “*The Priest in Nigeria, A Layman's Perspective*”, in L. Mbefo and Ernest M. Ezeogu, *Op. cit.*, pp. 31-48.

28 SIST means Spiritan International School of Theology, situated in Attakwu, in Enugu State of Nigeria.

29 *Ibid.*, p. 31.

minority group, the clergy”³⁰. For him, following the uncompromising attitude of many clergy, “there is non-recognition and non-involvement of the laity Council in important Church activities”. Trying to find reason for the attitude of many priest toward the laity, Dodo has this to say: “Our investigations show that some of the priests are frustrating the laity and Laity Council by not allowing the establishment of the Laity Council for fear that if the laity (being in the majority) are allowed to organize themselves properly into a Council they may take over power from the priests”³¹. This presentation shows that the establishment of the parish Council in parishes has not been an easy task in Nigeria.

The parish Council is made up of the hard working and devoted members of the parish selected from different stations or local communities that make up the parish. Usually, these are selected from the energetic members, irrespective of their age, being made up of old and young people who have leadership gifts and are known to be good and devoted Christians. Normally, they take care of some societal and marital problems when the parish priest deems it necessary. Thus, they help to maintain discipline among the faithful and settle different problems that arise either in the Church or among the members of different zones, communities and families. At times, the faithful feel free in laying their complaints first to the members of this Council, who would try to settle such problems, before going to the parish priest, if the problem remains unresolved by this committee. In principle, they take care of the Church’s property including the welfare of the parish priest and other mission pastoral workers like the reverend brothers and sisters, catechists and animators of groups and youths who work hand in hand with the priests. They have great power in a parish and Bishops respect their opinions.

The Parish Council normally elects the chairman who presides over meetings but when the parish priest attends the meeting, he is allowed to preside. A parish Council chairman was proud to tell me that by virtue of his position, he had been the chairman of their parish for many years and the problem he used to encounter with the priests who served in his

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p.39. Here, Chief Dodo made it clear that in virtue of his National office and experience, his paper represented the general opinion of many lay people in Nigeria, when he wrote: “In view of my present position as the National Chairman of the Catholic Laity Council 1976...my paper is not an individual layman’s perspective but an attempted summary of the views of many lay persons drawn from all over Nigeria who have served in the Council at one time or the other from 1976 to 1992 including my personal views.

locality is that “many of them do take the undue advantage of their positions” to the detriment of the majority or the common good. In his words, “many of them are wonderful priests to the best of my admiration but they have little or no regard for existence of the parish Council and their decisions are personal”. The lay people believe that the priests loved to logically redirect their thoughts to their (priests’) line of convictions, contrary to what they would ordinarily argue for, and in some situations, their (Council members) thoughts are dismissed without reasonable considerations. In some parishes, the priests get on well with their council members, but this is minimal and mainly in rural areas.

Conflicts do arise when in some parishes, the pastor arbitrarily rules on all the decisions that affect the administration of the parish, irrespective of the majority opinion to the contrary, particularly during a Parish Council meeting. Following this system, the Parish Council cannot take strong decisions in the absence of the parish priest and carry it out. Suffice to say that the pastor’s decision is final as major decisions in the parish are to be taken during the Council’s meetings. This is understood, especially from the point of view of his position as leader of the parish who makes the decision. In actual fact, his decisions should be the fruit of the Council’s deliberation on such issues and not a unilateral one. When the parish pastor acts single-handedly, there used to be a general feeling among some people that parish Council’s decisions were over-influenced by the clergy³². In some situations where the Council tried as much as possible to assert its independence as a retributive justice by holding its meeting and taking decisions and communicate to the pastor afterwards for approval, he will not take it kindly. Though, this is not the right thing, but at times, the Council is pushed to the wall and they cannot, but come up with such mannerism, especially when the pastor, for no just reasons, refuse to attend to meetings when due. In most cases, there were rivalries between the priest in-charge and the parish Council when things were not done the way they should have been on either side, hence, lack of collaboration.

32 V.A. Nwosu, The Laity and the Growth of Catholic Church in Nigeria, The Onisha Story 1903-1983, Nigeria-Ibadan: Intec. Publication Ltd., 1990, p. 127.

2.3 Parish priest and the parishioners

By parishioners, I include all members of the parish, different organizations and societies (i.e. men organizations, women organizations, youths' organizations, pious societies, etc). The parish priest co-ordinates and animates all these societies. None of these organizations could make an important decision (i.e. the making of uniform wearing by CWO {Catholic Women Organization} projects, etc), without the "express permission" of the parish priest. Any effort to carry out a decision of this nature will be met with failure and the organizers will be given a penance, as a punishment and at times being embarrassed by strong official pronouncements that will make them feel guilty before the congregation. One way of meeting punishment on them is a "denial of Holy Eucharist" for a number of weeks or asking them to "kneel at the rail" of the altar before the whole congregations for a number of minutes when the Eucharistic celebration is on. One of these incidents happened in my home parish and I had to talk to the priest in-charge, but he insisted that he was right. Those, who do not take this kindly, feel insulted and abandon their Church entirely.

2.4 Parish priest and the youths

In some parishes, however, youths are driven by their own energy and initiative to engage in religious activities like group bible studies, corporal works of mercy (such as visiting, praying and consoling the bereaved, the sick and the aged), and at times, organizing and teaching catechism classes. In extra-curricular school activities, they engage in visiting hospitals and prisons, educational programmes and workshops, checking religious indifferences among the students. Thus, they foster the spirit of responsibility and sense of commitment to their faith. When recognized by their parish priest, they form Church choirs, charismatic groups, lay reader's associations and music bands that make Eucharistic celebration lively. Suffice it to say that the Church needs these youths and where this is lacking, a 'great vacuum is created'.

Jonathan Uba rightly pointed out the lack of co-operation from some of the clergy that "makes the successful involvement of youths in evangelization very difficult". He observed that they cannot in any way by-pass (and should not by-pass) their pastors "in all their

evangelizing efforts no matter how genuine and noble such efforts may be”³³. Some priests who are dedicated to the youth apostolate are often discouraged as they are referred to, with some grain of sarcasm, as “youth fathers” by some of their brother priests³⁴. This situation of the youths also applies to other lay members of the Church in different contextual ways in the parishes. It depends on the ability or inability to adapt to the situations and handle them as carefully as is humanly possible³⁵. One of the problems of the youths is that job opportunities are rarely offered them in a parish and many of them end up becoming wanderers, in an effort to secure employment.

For instance, as a one-time chaplain of the youths in Idah diocese, during our yearly “Youth’s Rally”, such issues as lack of facilitation (i.e. encouragement and concern) that should have been expected from shepherds and custodians of the Church were being presented to me as necessary obstacles that affect the active involvement of the youths in parish activities. Addressing this issue, Goldwin Jonathan Uba, maintains the view that “sometimes, the problems the youth face in their exercise of evangelization have to do with the reaction of priests. The reaction of priests to the youth apostolate depends largely on their understanding and implementation or non-implementation of the provisions of Vatican II and the new Code of Canon Law. Although, in some areas, some of the youths used to be rough and non-compromizing, irrespective of all the efforts being made by their priests to animate them. But, this is an exceptional situation that is minor in our treatment.

2.5 Parish priest and the mission workers

Father, it is difficult for me to bear the situation I have found myself and my family now. Really, it came to me unexpectedly and I do not know what to do. We need to understand that we all belong to God’s family. It is very painful to see yourself being asked to go just like that, after serving in the mission for more than fourteen years with numerous kids I am taking care of. And the worst part is that it is not easy to find work in this our environment. Why all these and why me, father? The issue is that a new parish priest who is just posted to us visited and told me that I would not be his cook, he would finally arrive with his own

33 J. Uba, “*Practical Problems Faced by Catholic Youths in their Involvement in the Evangelization and Political Transformation of Nigeria*”, in F. N. Akukwe and C. C. Ilozumba, Catholic Youths and the New Nigerian Society, Nigeria-Lagos: Catholic Secretariat Publication, 1992, p. 109.

34 *Ibid.*, p. 109.

35 *Ibid.*, p. 108.

cook and that he made this known to his predecessor. The priest I was serving was sent to continue his studies overseas. But, he told me that he pleaded with this new priest to allow me be his cook as I have survived many priests³⁶.

This is one the nature of complaints I was getting from the mission workers, more especially in Aba diocese where many of them know me as one who worked with their bishop at the early stage of the creation of the diocese around 1999. But, when I asked why the lay people are not trusted, the quick response I got from the side of the clergy was that the “lay people do not see the Church’s property as belonging to them. The societal attitude of trying to get ‘a share from the national cake’ influences their general attitude even toward Church properties”. Moreover, “if anything goes wrong, the parish priest would be responsible for it, hence, a vigilant close supervision on Church properties and on the attitude of the employed always”. This is the mentality we are trying to dismiss, the idea that mission property belongs to the priest and a lay person has no responsibility in it. Such ideas need to be dissuaded from people who belong to one communal family of God.

Generally, in this and other dioceses, many mission workers including the catechists have resigned on their own, while some were terminated from working by their pastors without any remuneration. By mission workers, I mean the catechists, the parish secretary, the cook, the gardener and all other employees who work in the parish rectories. These are all paid by the pastor in-charge of a parish and normally, they employ them. Some of them are on benevolent or voluntary services to the Church, acting as assistants while hoping to be employed with time. However, it is not an exaggeration, following our interviews and feedbacks we got, to say that in many parishes, depending on the nature of the pastors, many of these workers are treated as second-class children of God, with little or no respect to their human dignity.

How do we explain a situation where a pastor posted to a new parish decides to terminate the appointment of a mission cook who has served for many years and employed a new person, a close relation of him (parish pastor), as I discovered when I invested into the

36 Presentation from a cook whose work was terminated after serving in a parish for 12 years by a young priest who was posted to this parish after his three years of ordination. He was interviewed.

case? Even the benevolent services of some are not appreciated or being encouraged in the activities many lay people volunteered to do. In some other parishes those of them who are paid are not only subjected to poor and uneven salaries, but in many cases, these salaries will be paid at irregular periods. At times, despite the regular government wage standards in most mission areas, it is becomingly very difficult to standardize the wages of the mission workers and many of us use the advantage of this to exploit these innocent souls who trust and rely on us³⁷. Some of the clergy argue that even the “priests are not paid”, their services also could be considered as “voluntary benevolence”. Moreover, that it is never the intentions of the priests to exploit the people of God, rather they should see it as a service to themselves and not to the priests. Granted that the priests are not paid salaries, but they are allowed certain percentage of the mission income, for their feeding and maintenance. In some parishes, they are totally in control of the Church collections. Moreover, their profession is a special vocation which should not be compared with that of a lay person who volunteers to help out in a parish. I agree that the lay volunteers or workers should see their services like that of the pastors, as the work of God and the Church, as communally owned. It is important for us to realize that respect is reciprocal and we should accord it to whom it is due, irrespective of profession. These lay workers have the kids and families to take care of.

However, one thing is certain: not all the clergy are involved in treating the laity in their parishes with such uncalled for attitudes. A good number of them do care and in some cases, “the problem could be the lay members themselves who overstep their boundaries at times; like those who try to dictate to their priests, (especially the young priests), instead of entering into dialogue with them, on what to do”. But this is rare and of course, far from the above observations we are talking about. However, where such is the case, there will be a mutual suspicion and lack of confidence on both sides. Where mutual suspicion exists, there is no confidence; and where confidence is lacking, there will be no collaboration and no trust, hence, mission will suffer.

37 V.A. Nwosu, *Op. cit.*, p. 71.

3. Seminary formation house

Having seen the parish true life in Igboland as it exists between the clergy and the laity, the aspect of the seminary formation will help us to understand more the structural problem of our thesis. Seminary in a general sense is a place or institution for the formation of the young people who are aspiring to become leaders of the Church tomorrow. It is a place where future priests are formed both intellectually and spiritually so that in turn, the ordained will take care of souls entrusted to him in a parish or elsewhere he is posted to work. In its technical definition, the word seminary is reserved to the schools instituted in accordance with a decree that started with the Council of Trent (See Vatican II document), for the training of the Catholic clergy. The purpose of seminary education is to teach candidates of the priesthood, what a priest ought to know and to make them what priests ought to be. It is in view of this purpose that everything in the form of studies and discipline ought to be directed towards its accomplishment as they serve the people later.

The average chronological age of students in the major seminaries in Igboland: philosophy is about 22 years and theology is 27 years. Most students enter the junior seminary at the age of 15, after the completion of primary education. They graduate in philosophy, mostly between the ages of 22-24 years and in theology, at the age of 28/30 years, more or less. However, this depends on the person's age before entering the seminary (minor or major), as some could be late vocation or even early, as the case may be. They are all boys from different parts of the country with different cultural backgrounds, although majority is Igbo. All are Catholic by profession of faith.

The psychological threat is more of tension for passing exams and the fear of expulsion. Due to the nature of their formation, they are limited in their social interaction unlike their counterparts in the universities who engage themselves with parties, social gatherings like movies and party drinks. The seminarians are respected in the society more than their counterparts in the universities or colleges of higher learning in view of what they are aspiring to become and the inclusive nature of their formation.

The average age of professors, who are mainly priests and few reverend sisters is 36, or here about, and this varies with different seminaries. Our seminary observation of the existing poor collaboration, following our research findings, will be treated under the

following points as causes: (1) structure of the administrative staff (2) formators and the formed, and (3) method of pedagogy.

3.1 Nature of the administrative staff

The Major Seminaries are controlled by the Bishops and Religious Superiors, who appoint and terminate the services of the professors, determine in detail the regulations to be followed, and watch-over the temporal administration, studies, discipline, and piety. These religious authorities appoint the rector as the sole administrator of the seminary and he is made to be accountable only to them. The other professors in the seminary are merely regarded as teachers. Although, in some situations, some rectors often try to create the impression that all the professors are involved in the decision-making and policy issues that affect the running of the seminary, but in practice, this is not always the case as they (the authorities) consider the Church and her administration to be the paramount. Normally, most policy issues should be determined by the governing Council of the seminary where this operates.

Staffing of the Seminaries over the years has been a major problem marred by politics of identity and belonging, based on regionalization, ethnicity and diocese principles. In some situations, some Bishops and Provincial Superiors are compelled to send priests to teach in the seminary even where the diocese or the Province may be lacking personnel. The evidence is that some dioceses or Provincial Regions (for the religious) have more personnel (ordained and qualified priests) than others. In some situations (according to my informants)³⁸, when some authorities determine to send their priests, they select those ones they want to be distanced from them in their dioceses as they feel that these priests are giving them hard time. Mostly, the categories of priests associated with this type of treatment are those who have finished their studies.

This type of view or regard for the seminary training consciously or unconsciously has its negative implications on the formation process of the future priests to be. Firstly, if for

³⁸ These are Nigerian Priests who passed through the same experience, working or studying in Europe and would not like their names to be mentioned.

instance, a priest holds a negative attitude for his appointment to teach in the seminary, definitely, his input (contribution) will be minimal (i.e. his performances in the formation process), his intellectual excellence notwithstanding. This is a simple fact that his mind has not been tuned to discharge such a duty, as the reason for sending him is not justifiable enough. Some end up developing some psychological complications that may lead to psychiatric hospital. For some, the seminarians suffer the effect through the spirit of transferred aggression for the unfortunate ones who may suffer for just cause. This may take the nature of failing a student for no just cause or threatening to terminate his vocation by branding him a bad name or mere projection of hatred on the poor boy.

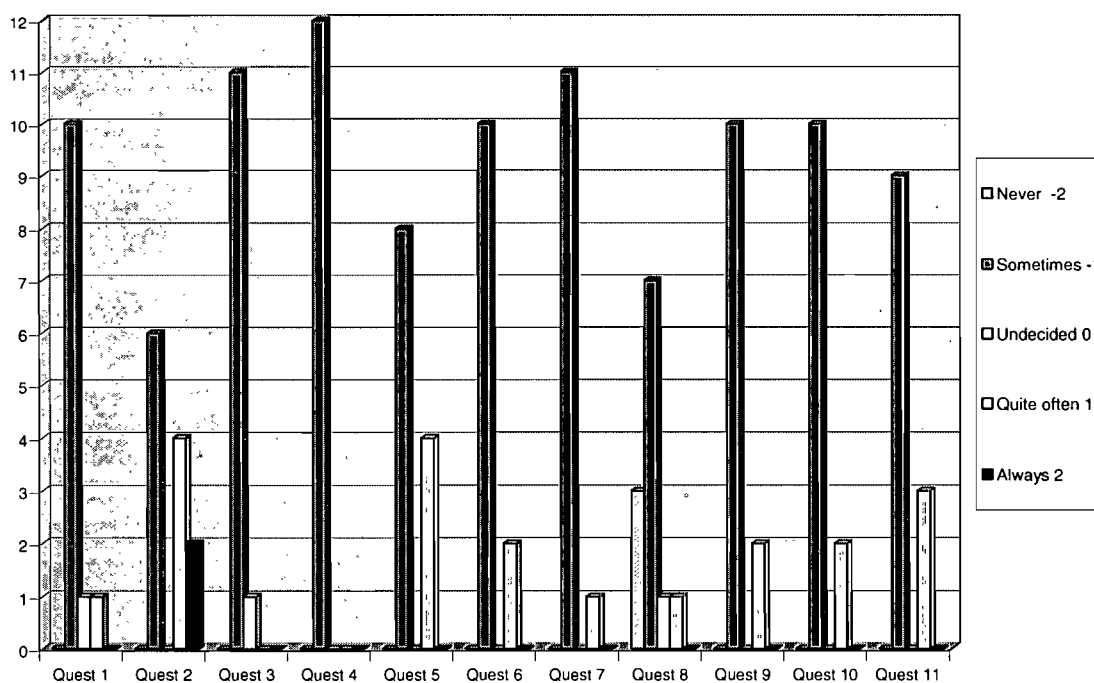
Secondly, the situation is even worse, where a bishop, under pressure, sends an incompetent (in the sense of the measurement of the material quality of personalities that should teach in the Seminaries) priest as a lecturer and a formator in the seminary, simply because he had a doctoral degree many years back, while he is no longer thinking of furnishing himself with current research work. He ends up assuming the authoritarian style of teaching where he will entertain little or no questions coupled with less academic challenges from students who are involved in research work. Such a professor will end up being apologetic and whoever goes contrary to his injunction is remarked for failure already. Moreover, he will end up antagonizing himself with all those around him including his fellow lecturers, thereby making dialogue or collaboration impossible. Nobody gives what he has not got. He may not perform, unless he is made a spiritual director, which even demands its charism and spiritual disposition: at least the ability to co-operate with others within the system. Truly speaking, such action is contrary to the needs of Seminaries that demand the best of the formators to be made available for the qualitative formation of the youth, the priests of tomorrow.

3.2 Seminary dynamism: the formators and the formed relationship

Compilation of the interview before 12 Seminarians

	Never -2	Sometimes -1	Undecided 0	Quite often +1	Always +2
Quest. 1:		10	1	1	
Quest. 2		6		4	2
Quest. 3		11	1		
Quest. 4		12			
Quest. 5		8		4	
Quest. 6		10		2	
Quest. 7		11		1	
Quest. 8	3	7	1	1	
Quest. 9		10		2	
Quest. 10		10		2	
Quest. 11		9		3	

Interview before 12 seminarians



In Old Onitsha Ecclesiastical Province that now includes Owerri as her twin sister that make up Igboland of Nigeria, we have four 'Major Theological Seminary Institutions'. The

questionnaire for the students contained both the restricted-response and the open-ended formats. These are fifteen questions, among which are eleven restrictions and four open-ended formats. The other remaining unrestricted five questions were directed to the lecturers. The closed-ended questions tried to elicit respondents' views on the desirability of the seminary-staff collaboration in relation to the method of teaching and learning in our seminaries, while the open-ended questions asked for students' opinions on learners' expectations and the prospects of changes in view of the strict nature of formation. The closed-ended question items followed the Likert's model with options in "Part I" of the students' questionnaire (aimed to determine teachers' instructional strategy as viewed by the student): of "never", "sometimes", "undecided", "quite often" and "always" as shown above (ref. also to appendix 5). "Part II" of the questionnaire aims at determining the behavior of the teachers as perceived by the students. Due to the limited amount of time available for this study, a sample population of Institutions for student interview of this aspect of facts finding was limited to two major seminaries, but the dialogue approach, especially with their professors (both current and past), went beyond this scope. The response expected from the students helped to elicit some relevant information as they guided our presentation of the problem here. Each response was given a score code (in the scale of preference) from -2, -1, 0, +1 and +2 respectively. The outcome here is that the highest frequency number is "Sometimes", which by its nature of code has a minus one sign (-1), and by way of percentage is insignificant; while those with positive signs like "Quite Often" and "Always" have "plus one" and plus two (+1 & +2) but they attracted low responses as shown in the chart and figure table. The weight of the response is on the negative side which many students also expressed verbally, during the interview that "they are in bondage". What this means in effect, as will be explained later, is that the nature of seminary formation in Igboland has not changed much following its history and the method needs to be improved to allow the students the necessary freedom to be themselves by speaking out their minds, especially, on issues that affect them.

Thus, the problem of collaboration or effective dialogue as presented above has its foundational base on the poor existing relationship between the formators and the formed in our seminaries. The issue is that seminary system immediately after the missionary era

did not change much. The leadership of the Church in Nigeria gradually entered into the hands of the Nigerian clergy coupled with the training of the future priests when the white missionaries left the country in 1970 after the Nigerian-Biafra war. This ecclesial problem of supremacy still persists up till today. Nigeria has been blessed with a vocation boom; hence, there are many seminarians in major and minor houses of formation. All dioceses have their own established junior seminaries while most if not all senior seminaries are jointly owned by the various Ecclesiastical Provinces; and we have the religious congregations, who are striving to have their own formation houses. In spite of all these, this structural ecclesia problem, spirit of collaboration in cordial relationship, still persists in Igboland.

In some situations in the seminary, the formators, through intimidation and propaganda, had sown distrust among the students and, thereby, dividing them against themselves. With this system of formation, a high level of mutual distrust and poor collaboration do exist in the seminaries and consequently, meaningful dialogue and healthy relationship become virtually impossible.

Due to the principle of superiority and inferiority syndrome, the seminarians are said to be marginalized in relationship with their priest professors. In most cases, the student's association (human interaction) is more among themselves than what it should be: cordial relationship with the professors. Those who relate closely with the authorities are the chief functionaries like the auxiliaries (the senior head students that speak for the seminarians before the members of the staff). We also have the student board representatives (a committee charged with the responsibility of representing the interest of the seminarians - what they like and what they do not like). In some cases, their propositions are not even carried out, as they cannot go on riot like their counterparts in the circular universities, who occasionally carry placards and demonstrate against the government or university administration on certain policies that affect their interest. Moreover, the elected people in the seminary act more as "yes members" to the authorities at the expense of the interest of the seminarians as they cannot challenge the views of the hierarchical seminary authorities

without getting their repercussions collectively or individually. Where is the collaboration, one may ask?

It is unfortunate to realize that at times, the “professors use the special functionary students against their fellow students in terms of spying and getting the necessary information” they may need. This is because, each professor in some seminaries is attached to a hostel and he is supposed to give account of each student, at the end of academic session as a house professor. As many of them do not know the seminarians well, they commit some dormitory prefects to help provide them with the necessary information they might need. At times, without thorough investigation, in most cases, these tricks are used as evidence for the expulsion of students with a view to reducing the growing students’ population. This is to the extent that “failing to attend morning mass” or “manual labour” or “being late in some activities”, in some cases, could be translated as evidence of a lack of vocation. In some cases, such situations could constitute enough reason for the expulsion of a student, without giving him a hearing. Under such an ugly situation, collaboration is difficult to maintain because, you do not know whom to trust – your best friend could betray you without your knowing it. It is surprising that before the end of every long vocation, a good number of the senior seminarians will receive letters from their seminary authorities not to come back to the seminary, at times, without substantial reasons.

Many of our seminarian aspirants have ended up their priestly journey through this way after spending so many years in the seminary. In view of this, some develop negative attitude toward the Church and its administration, while others end up not going to Church at all or resorting to joining other Pentecostal Churches. Suffice it to say that seminarians (within our context) are not free as they are everywhere in chains (being tale-guided by all eyes of the society) until they become ordained. Under such situations, seminarians can constitute problem to their fellow seminarians in reference to authority hunting: because of their inability to resist the temptation to betray their fellow student, for instance, or to be ready to bear the responsibility in an adult manner by not responding to such tasks; or at the other extreme, because of their tendency to see any authority whatever as an encroachment on their personal freedom and to react aggressively to it as some adolescents do³⁹. These are

39 *Ibid.*, pp. 324-5.

the groups who, either because of what they will get from the authorities or a way of protecting themselves, turn to “authority worship” thereby “canonizing” and “perpetuating” whatever evils done by the latter as good and the best, and such people in pretence, will be ready to defend these uncalled for actions to any length.

According to Fr. Emma Chukwu⁴⁰, the success of the seminary formation depends on the seminary discipline and all the formators mental outlook and conduct. Taking the argument from the fact that a priest in the seminary is a “formator, and a formator is a corrector and not a corruptor”, then there is the dare need to have the very best. The best should be those who devote their lives to study, bearing in mind cheerfully the burden of seminary rule and of busy life; by words and deeds, teach the students the observance of the seminary discipline, humility, love of work and retirement, and fidelity to prayer. Staffing of the Seminaries is further worsened by the fact that, “there exists no single institution or forum to form those who are in turn to form others in a special way”, he highlighted. Posting a priest to the seminary is not enough; for a priest, by ordination, is a formator of souls, but to be a formator of those who in turn will be formators is another challenging task, that calls for urgent attention realizing its involvement. Training for seminarians, therefore, requires not only wise regulations, but also competent educators, efficient collaborators who should be chosen from among the best and receive careful preparation in sound doctrine, suitable pastoral experience and special training in spirituality, human relationship and teaching methods.

3.3 Pedagogical method

It is difficult to talk of collaboration in our major seminaries when some students are encouraged to betray one another. The question is: who is to be trusted? One then wonders how relaxed a seminarian will be to acquire his education when the atmosphere is tensed up; and moreover, when the nature of pedagogy is not healthy enough for easy assimilation, either. Thus, another aspect of the challenging issue at stake here is the methodology applied today in most of the major Seminaries. The nature of our seminary training tends much toward “academic” “speculative” and theoretically oriented whereby, one is expected to

40 Rev. E. Chukwu taught in one of our seminaries for some years before leaving to further his theological education in Belgium.

study and reproduce during exams, fundamental theology, morals, canon law, Dogma, etc, all with foreign orientation and background, divorced of contextual cultural problems. Education, following the methodology of some professors, “suffers from narration sickness”. The teacher talks about real time as if it were motionless, static, compartmentalized, and unpredictable. Or else he expounds on a topic completely alien to the existential experience of the students. His task is to “fill the students with the contents of his stagnant narration – contents that are detached from real time, disconnected from the contextual issues that could give them significance. At times, words are emptied of their concreteness and become mere hollow, alienated from the real life of the people. Instead of imparting or communicating, the teacher issues communiqués and makes deposits which the students accept patiently without complaining, to avoid expulsion that will rub them of their precious God given vocation into priesthood. This is what Paulo Freire calls “*the banking concept of education*” in which the scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filling, and storing the deposits⁴¹.

The implication here is not that the students are under taught or that the seminary products are poor materials in comparison with other university students or their peers in public sectors, within and beyond. Weighed in the balance with clergy elsewhere, Nigerian priests are never found inferior or lacking in comparison with their colleagues⁴²; not at all, they always excel, but the problem is that the teaching is more of foreign orientation, divorced of cultural applicability and spirit of fraternity, collaboration, and love that should colour the general attitude. In the absence of originality, the obedient seminarians have no option than to take what is offered and made available to them – the Western culture, a “dehumanising system of formation”.

There is no gainsaying the fact that the seminary nature of formation in some of our major institutions constitutes a challenge to the structural propagation of faith and the spirit of collaboration. Imagine today, when the major concern in “Africa is hunger”, the issue in the Church is “power tussle”, “conflict”, “tension”, etc. Among the qualities required to

41 P. Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, New York: Tenth Printing Press, 1974, p. 58.

42 Cf. L. Mbefo, “*On-Going Evaluation of Priestly Formation*”, in L. N. Mbefo & E. M. Ezeogu, The Clergy in Nigeria Today, Nigeria-Enugu: Snaap Press, 1994, p. 190.

function as a good priest or religious, is “obedience without question” which takes priority. In a continent where 50 percent of the people live in absolute poverty and an estimated 400 million are living in extreme poverty in 1995, which could be even more now as the situation is getting worse every year, candidates for priesthood and religious life are assured of food and the other material necessities of life by foreign agencies⁴³ and the local contributions of the laity.

However, this does not guarantee their happiness and free collaboration, even among their mates. Removed in this way from ordinary concerns, they are rendered incapable of experiencing and appreciating in a practical way the lot of the challenging problems of majority of Africans; the root causes of poverty and African needs, escape them at the most practical level. However, because they are fed, they are dependent. “Instead of abandoning the dependency syndrome by directing attention to the needs of Africa, their way of life, they are often diverted by the hands that feed them to a preoccupation with the concern of the Church of Rome – its laws, its rituals, its doctrines – which are imposed on the mass of believers, whether or not they are tangentially related to the contextual problems”⁴⁴.

The image of a priest as a ‘man set apart’ is not very helpful when it is disassociated from the reality today, especially within the Igbo context where a personal involvement is required. A priest isolated from the members of his community cannot be truthful to his explanation of the living experiences which, by its nature, demands collaboration through sharing of experiences and activities backed up with the cultural life of the people. Our research findings are very revealing.

43 E. E. Uzukwu, “*The birth and Development of a Local Church: difficulties and signs of hope*” in Maura Brown (ed.), *Op.cit.*, p. 5. Professor E. Uzukwu was the first director of one of the two chosen major seminaries that were closely studied.

44 *Ibid.*

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE OBSERVATION AND ANALYSIS

In chapter one of our practical observation, we tried to present our problem of collaboration as it operates in our dynamic situation. In this second part, we shall concentrate on the review of literature and other carried out documented relevant research facts on the same issue. This review will concentrate more on clergy-laity collaboration. It will be followed with the analysis and the conclusion of our observation on the nature of collaboration that exists among the actors of evangelization in Igboland of Nigeria.

1. Literature review

We will present our review of literature under the following three sub-headings: (1) laity-clergy collaboration, (2) poor inculturation between the Gospel and the culture, (3) collaboration as it exists in the seminary formation.

1.1 Literature review on laity-clergy collaboration

In the review of literature, we have chosen to succinctly present some of the relevant texts that touch directly on the subject matter internally. For this “observation”, we will limit ourselves to the presentation of the few selected African texts written by well-known theologians, mainly the Igbos. These are people who have expressed their concern in their different ways that are of some enlightenment towards the ways they conceive the main problem: poor collaborative ministry among the agents of evangelization, (mainly clergy-laity) in the ecclesia family of God in Igboland of Nigeria in particular, and Africa in general which has occasioned concern to many of us theologians. It is important to note that this dissertation is not out to show that the laity does not work with the clergy but the fact remains that, internally, there are many squabbles, crises and spirit of depression, especially on the part of the lay people who are being treated as strangers in the Lord’s vineyard. One thing we have to notice here is that this chapter is not a repetition of first

one, but a complement that reiterates the evidence of the problem of collaboration as presented above. As such, its subtitles will not be the same as those of the above per se, rather they are relevant presentations of people's views of the existential issues that relate to those treated in chapter one. Thus, the issue of how far and how convenient the laity has been working in collaboration with the clergy remains a big question. In other words, one would love to know to what extent the laity is involved in the activities of the Church following the teaching of Vatican II on common priesthood. Closely articulated to this is the problem of ecclesiology that lacks real inculturation of the Gospel message. These and other questions of the same nature are the crux of the problems that pre-occupy our minds here. Since our thesis is situated within Africa, we shall present in details the Igbo, Nigerian scene and the thought of some African theologians that reflect the actual situation of clergy-laity collaboration.

1.1.1 Nigerian perspective on clergy-laity collaboration

Rev. Professor Okoro's observation here is very relevant considering the issue of clergy and laity in Igboland of Nigeria, where he holds that the reception of the gospel message was "an adaptation without blending and obedience at all cost to the white man's system of worship: use of Latin in liturgies, obedience to authoritarian orders and all injunctions". It is well represented here:

Other indices of colonial practice, mentality, and structure in the Igbo Church included emphasis on the church as a hierarchical pyramid comprising the Pope, Cardinals, Bishops, Priests, Brothers, Sisters, and lay people. The key actor, the Rev. Father, was almost everywhere a white man. There was a wall between the clergy and laity – a wall created not only by bureaucratic centralism but also by language and colour barriers¹. Church authority was entirely vested on the clergy. This authority gave rulings practically on every aspect of ecclesiastical life and practice. Acceptance without question was in fact the very sign and proof of a "good Catholic", to have no initiative, to make no decision and simply to ask: "what does the Church say?" There was a great dichotomy between the clergy and the laity. Not only did the clergy dictate in matters of faith, moral and liturgy but also in matters connected with administration, discipline, finance and Church development².

1 B.C. Okoro, The Igbo Church and Quest For God, Nigeria-Obosi: Pacific College Press, 1985, p. 7.

2 *Ibid.*, p. 7.

Realizing what is happening today in our ecclesiastical system, this presentation touches on the main issue that is fundamental for the qualitative growth of the local Churches. In the process of receiving the new faith, the evangelized end up adapting every aspect of life-style of the evangelizer that was encapsulated within the process of imparting the Gospel message. Thus, the definition of reception is purposely couched in general terms in order to cover the many processes of colonization. The things “received were not only doctrinal truths but also disciplinary matters, ecclesiastical laws and customs, as well as persons under high authority and power imposition”³. This system that structurally characterized the inherited ecclesia still persists internally, especially the relationship between the clergy and the laity in mission activities.

However, Professor G.A. Ojo, the one-time secretary to the National Laity Council of Nigeria (NLCN), presented the teething problems confronting the laity in Nigeria, particularly the NLCN organisation in relation to the clergy in three main points⁴.

Firstly, “the laity feels that it is distrusted by the clergy (Bishops and priests) as either “ill-informed” or as “an unnecessary imposition from Rome”⁵. Perhaps, the use of “ill-informed” could refer to the level of education a layman has in comparison with the clergy in theology. Today, we are not surprised to note that a good number of lay people go into studying theology up to doctorate levels. Following the teachings of the Vatican documents, *Lumen Gentium* and *Ad Gentes* that emphasize the role of the “laity working along with the hierarchy”⁶, Ojo notes that the consent of the Bishops in support of laity is more in principle than in practice. In other words, “officially the Bishops and the priests theorize on the Vatican II’s powers to the laity’s actions in keeping with its new-found awareness”⁷.

³ A. Ekwunife’s presentation during interview discussions.

⁴ G.A. Ojo, “*Emergence of Laity Organizations in Nigeria*” in A.O. Makozi & A.G. Ojo, (eds), *The History of the Catholic Church in Nigeria*, Nigeria: Macmillan, 1982, pp. 71-84.

⁵ Quoted in L. N. Mbefo, C.C.Sp., *Towards A Mature African*, Lagos: Snaap, 1989, p. 107.

⁶ Vatican II, *Ad Gentes*, 21.

⁷ L. Mbefo, *Op. cit.*, p. 107.

Secondly, there are no clear distinctions in the nature of functions that exist in the parishes and dioceses. There is an overlapping of power that makes it difficult to distinguish between the “Pastoral Council shepherded by the bishop and the laity Council meant to be piloted by a layperson”⁸. The truth here is that the chairman of the laity Council is under the bishop who is the shepherd of the local Church. But in virtue of his function, the chairman and his Council are free to take decisions that affect the laity and as such, should be given a free hand to operate instead of coaxing them. Confusion arises when some “influential personalities” are represented in every committee or are thought to be indispensable for the life of the parish or diocese. “Rivalry, duplication, suspicion” and what he calls “power game” do enter into Church life⁹.

Thirdly, there have been open frictional confrontations between the clergy and the laity in relation to the “common priesthood” of the people of God. In some dioceses, Bishops have accused the laity of “overstepping their allotted bounds by interfering in the administration and government of the dioceses”. On the other hand, some leaders of the laity in some dioceses have “counter-accused their Bishops of ruling their dioceses by conservative methods not too different from those of Pre-Vatican II”¹⁰. Addressing the issue, D.D. Dodo, the one-time Presidents of the NLCN highlighted the point more as he noted:

Most of our priests particularly the old ones were used to the Pre-Vatican II system of the Church administration where they were all in all, with the laity as passive members of the Church who only carried out orders given by Reverend fathers. Vatican Council II and the new Code of Canon Law have given the laity more rights and responsibilities in the Church, giving birth to the new system of administering the Church, with the laity sharing some of the functions that were previously performed by priests and having a say in the administration of the Church. Some of the priests have faithfully accepted this new system of administration; they have adopted themselves to the new situation and are getting on very well with their laity. The main problem is that other priests have not accepted the new system and still treat their laity as an appendix of the Church even though they let people know that the Church should be administered according to the new system¹¹.

8 Cf. G.A. Ojo, *Op. cit.* p. 81.

9 Cf. Mbefo, *Op. cit.*, p. 107.

10 G.A. Ojo, *Op. cit.*, p. 81.

11 D. D. Dodo, “*Practical Problems encountered in Laity-Clergy relationship*” in F. N. Akukwe & C. C. Ilozumba, *The Youth the Church and the State*, Lagos: Catholic Secretariat Publication, p. 109.

The situation rose to the extent that some laity members withdrew from active participation in the affairs of the Church while in some dioceses, “some swore never to have anything to do with their Bishops”. Ojo described the ugly situation as “*a fierce locking of horns*” which drew the attention of the laity leaders who intervened several times to settle such ugly situations.

Following Ojo’s evaluation of the relationships, “the laity meets with ambiguous responses from its priests and Bishops. It would seem there is a cultural gap between what the hierarchy knows from the Vatican II about the role of the laity on one hand and what actually they are ready to allow the laity to operate”¹². The problem as presented by Ojo is really a historical one in the life of the Church. Vatican II used various ways to express the civic responsibility and dignity of all believers in respect to their participation in the common priesthood of the faithful as they work in collaboration. However, if we look at the *Dogmatic Constitution* on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, (L.G.) published on 21 November 1964, the second chapter on “the people of God” speaks of the communal life shared by all the members of God’s people who together in Christ, worship and bear witness to him. Specifically, L.G. numbers 9-17 stressed not only on the “common priesthood” of all the faithful, but also on the basic equality of dignity of each member of the community who shares in the life of Christ, who is priest, prophet and king with their different charismatic gifts. We shall see more of this in the subsequent chapters.

This text of Professor Ojo helps to project the main aspect of our problem which is the structure and the mood of running the Church that have not changed much since after the early missionaries and the Vatican II, consequently affecting the spirit of collaboration among the agents of evangelization in Nigeria.

11 G.A. Ojo, *Op. cit.*, p. 81.

12 G.A. Ojo, *Ibid.*, p. 81.

Father Luke Mbefo, an Igbo, Nigerian theologian, approached the issue from the point of view of human freedom and human dignity which, according to him, seems to have been denied the laity in terms of collaborative works with the clergy, when he remarks:

The Nigerian hierarchy would seem not yet to give full value to the revolutionary document “*Dignitatis Humanae*” which must rate with the *Magna Carta* and the Constitution of the United States of America in its affirmation of the rights of the individual. No less significant theologian than Karl Rahner regards this Vatican II decree as having more far-reaching influence than the concept of Episcopal collegiality¹³.

Mbefo, though within the class of the clergy, observed that the present attitude of the clergy as it exists in some dioceses and parishes does not reflect the teaching of the Vatican II in relation to the laity. For him, the problem is not only limited to Igboland but expands to other parts of Nigeria. Writing as a former director in a major seminary and as one who have taught in different major seminaries in Igboland, he further comments:

Nigerian Lay-people are today affirming their rights to decide for themselves. Their Bishops and priests may still consider the majority of the laity ignorant and immature but recent ecclesiastical history tends to contradict this assumption. Just as many of our doctoral dissertations inveigh against impositions from Europe during missionary era, so also are the Nigerian lay people are not ready to accept impositions from the Nigerian hierarchy¹⁴.

What Mbefo presented is the actual true situation, an unwarranted imposition on our lay brothers and sisters. More especially, if we consider this with the scope statement of Professor Ojo where he mentioned that the lay people feel the clergy looks at them as “ill-informed” which is another way of saying that they have little or no education to qualify them to handle important matters in a diocese. Should this be the case, one would then ask, what has education to do with respect for human dignity? Must we only respect the learned and scorn the less privileged in our communities? Does this in any way justify the nature of maltreatment some of the lay men and women parish workers receive in our Churches? Mbefo, rather, represents the use of “ill-informed” with such words as “ignorance and immature”. This inference will be useful for us when we treat collaboration in relation to

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 81.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 81.

the mystical body of Christ that involves the laity and the clergy respectively. One may wonder why such dehumanising terms are being applied to the laity; and what then do we teach the people as priests of God?

Father Nwosu, an Igbo, Nigerian popular historian and a long time national chaplain for the laity, in the text *The Laity and the Growth of Catholic Church in Nigeria*, rightly pointed out that the friction for poor collaboration between the laity and the clergy, has been a historical problem right from the period of the missionaries. Thus, the development of the laity associations in the Nigerian Church has always been the initiative from the lay people and not from the clergy. He even gave an instance with the Calabar diocese where the then bishop, J. Moynagh (a white bishop) was not in support of the creation of Eastern Nigerian Catholic Council (ENCC)¹⁵. The bishop feared its open confrontation with the government on education. According to him, this laity association was destabilized by some members of the clergy who felt that it was growing very powerful and expanding its bounds. The clergy decided to form another organization called youth wing of the ENCC being led by one Gabriel A.O. Eze from Nsukka and this was in opposition to the former. Father Maduka presented the issue thus: "it was to forestall such eventualities that the white clergy began to mobilize the youths as a possible counter force to the ENCC. This led to the formation of youth wing of ENCC"¹⁶.

This insight opens up for historical analysis for more understanding of the problem of collaboration that has been there right from the time of the early missionaries. This text is of importance as it tries to balance the actions of the clergy by presenting the reactions of the laity when situation gets worse:

In maintaining this link with the priest the Church Committee however tried as much as possible to assert its independence, hold its meetings without the priest present, and take decisions that were communicated to him afterwards for ratification only. This tendency to treat the priest as an "outsider" was a common cause of conflict and misunderstanding between the Church committee and the priest. For instance, at Nnewi, matters reached a state of mistrust between the parish priest, Father Kettels, and the Church committee

15 Cf. V.A. Nwosu, "*The Laity and the Growth of Catholic Church in Nigeria*" in A.O. Makozi and G. J. Ojo (eds.), *The History of the Catholic Church in Nigeria*, Lagos: Macmillan Press, 1982, p. 90.

16 Quoted in Nwosu, *Ibid.*, p. 91.

that the Church committee tried to evade the parish priest by requesting the bishop for a second priest in the parish¹⁷.

The above issue is just one out of many cases of its nature with regard to parish priest and parish Councils in Igboland that constitute the description of the *drame* (problem) and at the same time, projects the fact that collaboration is necessary in this zone. This insight will help to balance our analysis that both parties need education on human relationship and on the spirit of collaboration. As Nwosu continued in this narration, “the parish priest was attacked three years later following the dismissal of their request by the bishop”. This can only happen where the lay people are vocal enough to confront the priest and tell him what is in their minds. In most cases, seeing the priest as a Vicar of Christ and their spiritual father, following the traditional feature of respect and regard for consecrated beings, the people will condone everything done to them by their priest for fear of being cursed by the latter because of his position as “*Alter Christus*”. This means that all the administrative powers are within the authority of the parish priest and such cases of open confrontation have become the order of the day that needed immediate solution.

1.1.2 African perspective on clergy-laity collaboration

In view of clergy-laity lack of collaboration, I will first present the divergent opinions of African people on the laity. During the African Synod, all the Theological Institutes and Lay Apostolates, including men and women, contributed by presenting papers that were edited by the selected members of these Institutes.

* “Lay People Must Be Empowered” – *Theological Institutes For The African Synod* maintains that:

Without this acceptance of the life long engagement to the Gospel message, the Church in Africa today could experience a fate similar to, or even worse than that experienced in North Africa during the Islamic invasion. While the Church in Africa seems to be developing in terms of the creation of new dioceses, ordinations to the priesthood, and religious professions, alarming signs of a continuous exodus of our Catholic to join the African independent Churches, the new religious sects, Islam, and

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

traditional religions abound. We interpret this as a clear indication that the laity has not yet succeeded in meeting the various aspirations of the African people.... The voice of the laity must be heard¹⁸.

The above prophetic insight guided the Fathers of the Synod to reflect seriously on the deepening of the Christian faith which at this point, needs a model of the Church that responds to the challenges of African society today - a Church that will recognize the role of the laity, reconcile all agents of evangelization and commit them to African system of collaboration and care, etc. This presentation is a collective contribution which helps to show that the issue we are dealing with is not only a problem of Igboland, but beyond it.

Joseph G. Heealey (ed.) and other four Africans tried to evaluate small Christian communities (SCCs) in East Africa. Their report was presented by professor Uzukwu, CSSp, in one of his articles for the Synod. In Zaire, Church has started responding favourably to the “local context in its theology, its liturgy, and the form of its leadership”, but yet, “the very structure of authority with the Church made the birth of the local Churches extremely difficult, following the attempts in East Africa to develop small Christian communities (SCCs)”¹⁹. It has not attained its overall purpose, the reason being that it had not been allowed to be implemented in all the dioceses. Even in those places it operated, its “major problem” has always been its link to clerical resistance and control:

Some dioceses have done little to encourage SCCs in practical terms...SCCs are clerical-centred with little and at times no initiative at all from the laity...Some priests fear that if such communities are not properly managed other sects may spring up. There has been over-supervision of the SCCs due to fears of the dangers of the emergency of ‘splinter groups’ and ‘schisms’...Thus, SCC leaders are not allowed to take full responsibility...other people do not like changes. They want to continue things as they always did...When the lay people are responsible, the clergy tends to be strict. Good recommendations from the Christian communities are not welcome²⁰.

18 Cf. B. Maura, The African Synod, Documents, Reflections and Perspectives, Maryknoll (NY): Orbis Books, 1996, pp. 55-57.

19 E. E. Uzukwu, “*The Birth and Development of the Local Church, Difficulties and Signs of Hope*”, in Maura, Brown (ed.), *Op. cit.*, p. 1.

20 J. G. Healey, (ed.) “*Four Africans Evaluate SCCs in East Africa in the 1980s*”, in African Ecclesial Review, 1974, pp. 9-10.

While this new style of being Church through which the establishment of SCC's was perhaps, as a result from the breath of the spirit, its implementation rests in the "hands of those who exercise authority in the Church; those who gradually killed and discouraged charisms and initiatives from the laity"²¹. One can agree that preserving right doctrine (*Titus* 1: 11, 2:1) through supervision and control to avoid laicism and abuses of function on the part of the laity, is a right value to be maintained as "care must be taken to control those whose ears itch for novelties" (2 *Tim*: 4:3). The issue is that Church leaders appear to have exaggerated their fear of novelties in the SCC experiment. It is interesting to note that this criticized community way of serving small groups of the faithful turned out to be regarded as a base for the considering of African family ecclesia during the Synod.

1.2 The Gospel and the culture

Having seen the problem of clergy and laity in relation to collaboration within the present ecclesiology, another aspect of literature presentation is on the influence of the Gospel as preached by the early missionaries within the culture of the people. In Africa, of which Igboland is part of, social life, religion and culture are all inextricably mixed, and indeed justify one another. The religious cosmology is expressed in the ancestral cults, clan ceremonies and age-group initiations. What it means is "every aspect of life of a tribe is bound together, and to make within it a division of culture from religion is meaningless"²² even if many are converted, as it has to do with faith-commitment, the essence of true worship. On the other hand, one may tend to challenge this view from the point of view of Abraham's faith. He was asked to break from his paternal culture, from his family to a new promised land (*Gn*.12:1). In faith, he was spiritually and culturally uprooted²³ and brought to new promised land by God where he realised the fullness of his vocation as "father of all believers" without relapsing to the worship of idols that prevailed in his paternal home. The life of Abraham should be an exemplary situation to explain real conversion "when God

21 E.E. Uzukwu, *Op. cit.*, p. 1.

22 Cf. Andrian Hastings, *Church and Missions in Modern Africa*, London: William Clowes & Sons Ltd., 197, p.28.

23 Cf. Pontifical Council For Culture: - *Towards A Pastoral Approach to culture*, Kenya: Paulines editions, 1999, p. 9.

erupts in the existence of human beings, revealing Himself and arousing the commitment of their whole beings”²⁴. However, we should consider the fact that Abraham, even though he was asked to leave his territory, he was still within the same Palestinian parameter, as he did not migrate to another continent, neither was another foreign culture imposed on him different from his natural one. It becomes clear that Abraham was culturally converted per se, so one can understand his total adaptation. Thus, his situation should not be compared with that of the Igbos or African converts. But unfortunately, African traditional religion, which should have been employed for the salutary effects at the early missionary evangelization of the 19th century, was not seriously studied and understood before being neglected and brushed aside. For Meinrad, an African theologian, it “was indiscriminately condemned after a superficial survey, under the charge of primitive superstition, idolatry and immorality”²⁵. However, the words of the Fathers of African Synod underscored the attention that must be paid to dialogue and co-operation with other denominations including African traditional religion, Islam and with all who believe in God²⁶. Applying a sincere dialogue with African traditional religion, one will discover that Africans have a lot of good values that need to be explored for the propagation of the good news.

The style of teaching influenced the present attitude of the clergy towards the laity in Igboland of Nigeria in particular and Africa in general, and it gives a different outlook from that of Abraham. Under this ugly situation, E. Afigbo notes, “the Igbos, more than most other Nigerian peoples, tend rather recklessly to abandon their indigenous culture for European culture”²⁷ without blending. Father Christopher Ejizu regards it as “a senseless love for everything foreign; ultimately a hangover of the colonized mentality and emasculated personality”²⁸. Father C. Agu calls it a “slavish copying and sheepish

24. Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 9.

25 Meinrad P. Hebga, “*Universality in Theology and Inculturation*” in Elochukwu Uzukwu, (ed.) Bulletin of Ecumenical Theology, Issue on Captioned Power, Authority, and Leadership, Nigeria-Enugu: Snaap Press, 1994, p. 68.

26 Cf. Maura, Brown, (ed.), *Op. cit.*, Maryknoll (NY): Orbis Books, 1996. *Lumen Gentium*, N. 1, quoted by Cardinal Angel Suquia, “*The New Evangelization: some tasks and risks of the present*”, in Communion: International Catholic Review, Published in Washington DC, 1992, pp. 514-546.

27 A.E. Afigbo, “*Toward Cultural Revival Among the Igbo-Speaking People*”, in Annual Magazine, Nigeria-Owerri: Assumpter Press, undated, p. 4.

28 C. Ejizu, *Issues in African Traditional Religion [Aquinas Lectures]*, Nigeria-Portharcourt: CIWA, Portharcourt, Nigeria: CIWA Press, 1989, p. 7.

mimicking of western patterns”²⁹ without consideration to cultural differences. A. Ozigbo refers to the same problem “as the strange Igbo Craze for the exotic as they do not relish what is theirs. They are notorious for hankering after seductive cultural traits of other peoples even when such traits appear unintelligible”³⁰.

As Christianity has gone into the hands of the local evangelizers (local clergy and laity), a question of how far has Christianity been rooted will be met with such answers coming from some prominent Nigerian theologians like J. S. Ukpong and I.N. Enwerem. Justin S. Ukpong strongly holds that “it must be noted that Christianity will never take root in the hearts of Africans unless there is a struggle by African Christians themselves to understand the Christian faith and unless that struggle is encouraged”³¹. Ukpong sees the need of Christ entering into the cultural history of Africans through inculturation, which challenges all African theologians for its exploration. He believes that mission should have a local face, but not divorced of the universality. And Iheanyi Enwerem regrets the ugly situation where the local evangelization finds it difficult to change the pre-Vatican II institutional method of hierarchical structure. He writes:

But with the emergency of political independence in 1960 and following the Second Vatican Council, the Church in Igboland has been struggling for a more appropriate self-understanding and for Christianity to be rooted in her culture. Naturally and for a long time, this post-colonial Church followed the same method of spreading the faith, which she inherited from the foreign missionaries and to a great degree, shared their mentality, prejudices and canons of orthodoxy. Even today, after many years of formal departure of the Irish missionaries as a collective missionary force and the complete take over of the Church by the native hierarchy, the Church in Igbo land is still very much foreign. The structures and colonial modes of running the Church are still the same as in colonial Christianity”³².

This is the situation that has challenged African theologians to begin to restructure their theological and pastoral stand in the light of Vatican II and the mission today. In view of the prevailing existential situation of things in Africa, particularly in Igboland which is our point of reference, its Churches need a re-orientation of their pastoral plan of action, a

29 C.C. Agu, *Secularization in Igboland*, Frankfurt: Verlag Peters, 1989, p. 277.

30 R.A. Ozigbo, *Igbo Catholicism*, Nigeria: Onitsha, 1989, p. 35.

31 J. S. Ukpong, “A Critical Review of the Lineamenta” in Maura Brown, *Op. cit.*, p. 41.

32 I. N. Enwerem, “Theology in Igboland: A Critique in Method” in B. Okoro, *Op. cit.*, p. 73.

plan that would be all embracing in order to serve the suffering and eroding humanity in this fluid and turbulent period of history³³. Justin Ukpong asserts:

Africa is no longer to be seen as a land out there to be conquered by the Gospel message read through the lenses of another culture. Africa is first of foremost a land that is also heir to the patrimony that is the gospel message, which it must appropriate with its own resources. The African Church must search for its authentic Christian self-definition and its authentic interpretation and expression of Christianity. In turn, the African Church must set free the Christian for appropriation and interpretation by African Christians. Authentic proclamation also implies addressing contemporary issues. Hence, the African Church must identify the pressing religious, economic, social, and political issues facing Africa today as challenges calling for a prophetic voice of the Church³⁴.

The above quotation encourages the spirit of inculturation. It affirms that African Church, as the soul of the society, should not only recognize and accept the interdependency as a healthy ecclesial practice, but should also see that this is based on a healthy African ecclesiology. What it needs is not necessarily the creation of Western structural way of worship that is not in consonant with the cultural life of the people³⁵.

Under the given condition, Reverend Professor Terese Okure, in her article "Inculturation in Nigeria: a survey and evaluation", insists that inculturation of the Gospel message is therefore imperative to enable the people value what they have and this involves all and sundry. This is where she maintains that all agents of evangelization (clergy & laity) have to be involved in matters of inculturation that has to do with the incarnation of the gospel message within cultural milieu. She regrets that the members of the laity were not "regarded in any of the responses as agents and signs of inculturation". She then calls for "re-organization of the structures of government" in diocesan and parish levels, whereby, a

33 Cf. Johannesburg, Synodal Session, September 17, 1995.

34 *Ibid.*, p. 34.

35 A. Shorter, "Africa's Need: A second Liberation", in The London Tablet, 7 May, 1994, p. 551 quoted in Oliver Onwubiko, Theory and Practice of Inculturation, Nigeria-Enugu: Snaap Press, 1992, pp. 54-55. Onwubiko made reference to Shorter on his commentary of Fr. Efoe-Julien Penoukou's remark. Fr. Penoukou is the Rector of the Catholic Institute of West Africa in Abidjan and his remark is on Inculturation as "*a perfect communion of differences*" - the consolidation of pluralism in the Church's life. Onwubiko, while extolling this remark, concludes that it is not difficult that the same principle should also be applied in democracy in Africa. He continued, "to be pointed out is that the Church as Church, having 'no political or economic formulas', is not to be understood, strictly speaking, as the Church being apolitical. The is, that the Church cannot go on 'having no formulas' when moral issues like abortion, contraception, exploitation, degradation of human dignity, etc., are first made political issues, then economic, or social.

substantial role and responsibility will be given to the laity (including women) to reflect the African Church as a true family of God. The clergy must not lord it over the laity and vice versa. The person with a highest competence in a given area should be consulted and given post and that their activities must reflect the culture³⁶. As a Nigerian, Professor Terese Okure understands very well the spirit of collaboration in the life history of the Africans as opposed to a leadership of power imposition, hence, the importance of cultural historical review. What is interesting here is that Professor Terese Okure's work was a surveyed and evaluative analysis she made in view of the cultural values that are yet to be explored for the propagation of the Good News; and particularly, women's role was mentioned – the gender that has been eluding the aforementioned observations.

1.3 Seminary formation.

In our presentation of the project of this thesis, we indicated that the nature of seminary formation in Igboland of Nigeria does influence the seminarians' actions later as priests and the extent of their collaboration with the laity in parishes. In view of our expected objectives that require not only students who are down to earth with their cultural environment, but also vision of out-reaching (knowledge of other cultures and peoples) in collaboration, we will be expecting a holistic type of education that balances a human personality in the seminaries. Our seminary exposition as presented earlier will be complemented with what will be seen here. As it existed at different period in the history, I will endeavour to present three stages of seminary formation here, as this process will help us to cover a reasonable period. These periods are: (1) The early beginnings (1930-1960); (2) The post independence period (1960-1980); (3) Modern period (1980 to the present day).

1.3.1 Early beginning under bishop Heerey and Fr. John C. A. (1930-1960)

As the local Church was growing, the need for more apostolate, particularly, the indigenous clergy was also evident. In December 8, 1930, Rev. Fr. John Cross Anyogu was

36 Cf. T. Okure, (Professor at Research Institute of West Africa, Port-Harcourt, Nigeria), *"Inculturation in Nigeria: a survey and evaluation"*, in J.B. Amaissah (ed), Inculturation and the Mission of the Church in Africa, Port Harcourt: CIWA Press, 1992, p. 86.

made the first Igbo indigenous Vicariate priest. This newly appointed Vicariate worked relentlessly for the growth of the Church. Few years later, the working personnel in the Lord's vineyard progressed. But earlier, when the missionaries were in control, the expatriates were the majority and the Church growth was slow. Table statistics under-mentioned, show the situation of Onitsha Ecclesiastical Province, (Igboland) when the white missionaries were in control:

Table (A) Ecclesiastical Personnel, 1930

Expatriate Religious priests.....	67
Indigenous Secular Priests -----	4
Expatriate Brothers (O.S.F) -----	4
Expatriate Lay Religious (C.S.Sp.)-----	1
Expatriate Holy Rosary Sisters -----	37
Indigenous Sisters (Novices)	4
Major Seminarians (Theologians) -----	.0
Major Seminarians (Philosophers).....	13

From the above table, we notice that indigenous clergy and Reverend Sisters as at early fifties were very few in comparison with the expatriates after so many years of planting the faith. Bishop Heerey in collaboration with John Cross saw the need for the training of more indigenous clergy and religious for the continuation of the mission of Christ. His main aim was to meet up with the need of the growing Christians, as there were over 21 parishes and 1,306-recorded out-stations by then. Following this intention, St. Paul's Seminary, Igbariam was then established in July 1924. This was followed by St. Charles Teachers' Training College, established in 1928. St. Charles College was meant to take care of the teachers and seminarians on training as the latter were meant to join the students³⁷. In February 1933, Christ the King College (CKC), Onitsha was opened. By the year 1951, the establishment of our popular and permanent Bigard Memorial Seminary, Enugu, where majority of us passed through, (as it constituted one of the chosen Institutes

37 F.E. Okon, "Expansion and Consolidation : Growth in Onitsha, Calabar, Owerri, Ogoja and Umuahia", in Fr. Celestine Obi (ed), *A Hundred Years of the catholic Church in Eastern Nigeria 1885-1985*, Lagos: Academy Press, 1985, p. 183.

presented above), was established and it was said to be the lasting solution for the quest of the training of local clergy³⁸. Successively, the establishment of Religious Congregations of men and women followed. For example, the Immaculate Heart Sisters was established in 1937 and the “Indigenous Congregation for brotherhood was founded in 1946”³⁹.

By 1960, the Catholic Church in Onitsha Province (Igboland), had made a remarkable progress in the indigenization of the Church as Heerey worked hand in hand with John Cross Anyogu, as the figure below will show:

Table (b) Ecclesiastical Personnel, 1960

Expatriate Religious Priest.....	122
Indigenous Secular Priest -----	15
Indigenous Bishop (as aux) -----	1
Expatriate Franciscan Brothers -----	4
Expatriate Holy Rosary Sisters -----	27
Expatriate Marists -----	4
Expatriate Immaculate Heart Sisters -----	22

In the same period, the total population in the Archdiocese was 1,768,413, of which 380,893 were Catholics, 105,644 were Catechumens and about 100,000 were Protestants. Parishes rose to thirty-eight, each with at least one resident priest. The growth of the indigenous priest and Religious Congregation of men and women was successive as years passed by. From the scanty literature available and the interview with one of the pioneers (Very Rev. Fr N. Orakwudo, CSSp, by Prof. Anthony Ekwunife - Senior Lecturer at the University of Nsukka, Nigeria) at this early period, the following are characteristics of the seminary formation:

Isolation after an over-cautious selection and instant dismissal, paucity in numbers, foreignness of the general curriculum and unquestionable obedience on the part of the seminarians who were determined to persevere despite all odds. The spiritual

38 Cf. Golden Jubilee Celebration, 1924-1974, of Bigard Memorial Seminary, Nigeria-Enugu: Assumpta Press, 1974, p. 2, in Okon, *Op. cit.*, p. 183.

39 Cf. Okon, *Op. cit.*, p. 184.

orientations were purely devotional without any depth in theology to prop them. From the time they entered the seminary till their ordination day, the seminarians were isolated from their people, their traditional cultures and institutions. They were imbued with foreign cultures and manners. Their formators, who were foreign missionaries, may have been sincere and dedicated to their duties, but they could only give what they had, even though it was biased against anything African⁴⁰.

What is presented here by one of the pioneers of Catholic priest in Igboland, as reported by Rev. Ekwunife, helps to present a good picture of how the seminarians were being trained under the influence of the early missionaries. There was no room for dialogue or collaboration and the emphasis was in “speaking English and Latin, but inarticulate in their own native languages”. They were trained to “imitate their formators’ foreign cultures and manners but unable to study their own African religious culture”⁴¹. This is because, they were being trained, “consciously or unconsciously, to despise the very cultures where they were to work after their ordination”⁴². Having been brought up in a hostile and uncompromising atmosphere to their environment, these great pioneer priests could not be expected to behave differently from the structural orientation given to them in the seminary formation, hence, the passing on of the same method from “one generation to the other”. Professor Anthony Ekwunife tried to quote one of the Igbo historians, Father Casmir Eke, CSSp, who presented the prevailing thought orientations and attitude of formators towards the seminarians during this period, in the following words:

The history of the pioneer Igbo seminarian is one of heroic tenacity and humility in the face of great difficulties. For these pioneer seminarians, the most painful test came not from external circumstances; family opposition, Igbariam mosquitoes, painful manual work, inadequate teaching, but from the deep ambivalence with which they were viewed by the expatriate missionaries - an attitude that helped to retard the early growth of the seminary⁴³.

This process really retarded the potential and cultural growth of the seminary in Igboland. Referring to one of the pioneers, Ekwunife writes: “The epitome of the beneficiaries of this formation in foreign mould is our beloved late Bishop John Cross

40 Cf. A. Ekwunife, *“Integration of Traditional African Values in Priestly Formation”*, (Cf www.Sedos.org/English/ekwunife.htm).

41 *Ibid.*

42 *Ibid.*

43 *Ibid.*

Anyogu, first Bishop of Enugu (1962-1967). He was ordained a priest in 1930". From the brief experience of this great man, reverend Ekwunife concluded, "he was every inch an Irish/Englishman with an African skin"⁴⁴. What this implies is that he was totally brainwashed from anything African or Igbo as he was an Igbo man; meaning that he behaved like a white man, perhaps, in the way he related with the people. "This era of seminary formation in Nigeria lacked contextual orientation because of the formators' failure to take into consideration the cultural environment of the seminarians"⁴⁵, especially on the aspect of communal collaboration. It is unfortunate that the same foundation of training still lingers till today. This, no doubt, has its repercussions on the pastoral spirit of collaboration of these pioneer dedicated Igbo priests who did not receive an integral formation.

1.3.2. The post independence period (1960-1980): Onitsha ecclesiastical leadership under Archbishop (now Cardinal) Arinze

When Archbishop Heerey died in February 1967, the jurisdiction of the Archbishop fell on Archbishop Francis Arinze. His elevation marked the end of one era and the beginning of another⁴⁶. The appointment of Arinze (now Cardinal in Vatican) as the Metropolitan Archbishop of Onitsha Ecclesiastical Province was seen to some extent, as a positive fulfilment of the activities of the early missionaries for the growth of the Church. As we saw earlier, the work of the missionaries is to bring the gospel message to the "people who are far away", and till the soil and sow the seed. Arinze played the facilitation role by encouraging the stability and the growth of the message "which must come from a native hierarchy" (clergy and laity).

Cardinal Arinze, formally the Archbishop of Onitsha did a lot in making the lay people feel part and parcel of the Catholic Church when he assumed the post after the missionaries. But, some people see his approach as the only possible way to keep the Church going since he lacked enough clergy to work with. It is on record that he was the

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ F.E. Okon, *Op. cit.*, p. 185.

first indigenous Archbishop who devoted time to the organization of the Church in terms of collective administration, involving active participation of the laity. His achievement is beautifully presented by V.A Nwosu who highlighted the fact that he was exceptional, he put a foundational establishment of various laity organizations, most of which persist till today, when he says:

One of the areas in which credit must be given to him is making the establishment of various Pastoral Councils both at parish and diocesan levels. Thus there sprung up everywhere Parish Councils, laity Councils, Catholic women's organisations, Catholic youth organisations and Pastoral Councils. His belief in proper administration and the participation of clergy and laity in the Churches apostolate, led him to create various commissions, directorate and advisory councils, e.g. Medical Advisory Council, Liturgical Music Commission, Vocations' Directorate, Church History Commission, Directorate for Catechetics and social services, Building Commission, and so on. This pattern has been followed in many other dioceses in Onitsha Ecclesiastic Province⁴⁷.

This is a true belief of universality and diversity in the operation of the Church that the Archbishop set up a communal pace of activities in the Church's ministry, a process that was almost unique as it was not always the case with other dioceses. However, Archbishop Arinze faced the challenging situation of nurturing the faith with vigour and determination. The challenges of consolidation and administration of the Province when the expatriates must have gone was not easy for the young archbishop at the initial stage of his inception. The challenges were enormous and onerous during and after the Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970). All the expatriate priests hitherto working in the Archdiocese were forcibly expelled from the country and the government took over all the schools and colleges. He was left with a handful of local priests and sisters⁴⁸. There were about 73 expatriate priests and 16 indigenous priests working in 36 parishes in the Archdiocese of Onitsha shortly before the civil war. At the end of the war there were only 54 priests – all indigenous, working in the same number of parishes but with increased population⁴⁹.

47 *Bulletin de la Congrégation*, XIV, No. 13, February 1988, p. 442. Quoted in V. Nwosu, "The Catholic Church and the Development of Education in Eastern Nigeria, 1885-1982", Unpublished Paper, p. 46..

48 F.E. Okon, *Op. cit.*, p. 187.

49 V.A. Nwosu, *Op. cit.*, pp. 118-119.

However, Archbishop Arinze followed the challenges with a true belief of universality and diversity in the operation of the Church which enabled him to train up more clergy men to work in God's vineyard. He faced the situation with vigour and determination that the growth of the Church after the Nigerian Civil War was really remarkable. The Catholic population rose from 322,499 in 1970 to 401,659 in 1973, while that of the clergy jumped from 19 in 1970 to 123 in 1980⁵⁰.

In area of seminary formation, the situation was almost the same as that of the expatriates. The only difference was that the door was a bit open for more admission than what used to be during the time of the missionaries. Professor Ekwunife in his article "Integration of Traditional African Values in Priestly Formation, notes:

Since I was one of the beneficiaries of seminary formation within this period (1962-1970), I can best describe it as a "mixed whole". We went through contradictory experiences of what was supposed to be and what actually was. For example, in spite of the inculturation of Church liturgy being the trend, the people expected to carry out the necessary changes as future priests were made to believe that the ideal liturgy was either in English, or Latin. Strict discipline and blind obedience were enforced while individual initiative and creativity were smothered. After *Vatican II* and the Nigerian civil war, cultural adaptation and African theology became the common concern; although in the seminary, life remained the same. Philosophical lectures were given in Latin using, *Di Napoli*, as the main textbook. Often the professors used English for illustrative purposes. There was little or no effort to relate the African experiences of the seminarians to the curriculum of the seminary⁵¹.

What it means is despite the fact that Cardinal Arinze needed more clergy for the service of the people immediately after the war, the seminary training then almost remained the same as it used to be during the time of the early missionaries. Rev. Dr. V.A. Nwosu (an Igbo historian), in addition, recounts his personal experience which he regarded as "A Journey to the Priesthood"⁵². Here he emphasized that though indigenization of Church personnel, liturgy, theology and life was on paper as it was the main concern as at that period of seminary formation, in reality, "the seminarians were made to believe the contrary". The following unchangeable elements in formation: classical training in Latin,

50 F.E. Okon, *Op. cit.*, p. 222.

51 A.N.O. Ekwunife, *Op. cit.*, pp. 43-57.

52 V.A. Nwosu, "A Journey to the Priesthood: A Personal Experience" in A.N.O. Ekwunife, *Op. cit.*, pp. 43-57.

English and foreign customs were supposed to be within what was erroneously regarded as the ideal. The changeable ones consisted of expansion of seminaries, structural buildings and recruiting more seminarians for training. Ekwunife is right here when he holds that “if seminarians are trained to regard only foreign cultures as ideal, they will not be effective in their pastoral duties after ordination”. This is because the active concern for the indigenous people, particularly the poor, the marginalized and the oppressed in the society will not be properly taken care of. Moreover, the permeation of the Gospel message, which, according to Pope John Paul II should influence many different issues of family life, fundamental human rights and duties, justice and peace, development and liberation, culture and learning, cannot be implemented because formation in our seminaries is given a wrong approach to cultural values⁵³.

1.3.3 Modern period: 1980 to the present day

Prof. Ekwunife, an Igbo priest, in his article “Renewal of Priestly life and Ministry: the Nigerian Experience”, pointed out the fact that priestly attitudes to life “reveals the negative attitude of both formators and the seminarians in the 1980's towards the traditional religion and the culture that sustained it”⁵⁴. Trying to expand a reason for this, he maintains that the people were viewed as “being in darkness”. Even though the “formators were indigenous clergymen, the quality of formation still lacked deep cultural orientation”, which would encourage dialogue with “African traditional religion” and culture...To show the extent of this lack, he notes, “it is still doubtful whether the study of African traditional religion has found its way into the curriculum of junior seminaries in Nigeria or any other African country”. This is because “some major seminaries give it attention for only a semester while others for a session. This scanty attention is, of course, not enough to prepare candidates for a sincere dialogue with their African religious culture”⁵⁵. Fr. Ekwunife, as one of my informants during my research, speaks from his experience as a current senior Professor in one of the major seminaries we selected in our first chapter, just

53 A.N.O. Ekwunife, *Op. cit.*, quoted Pope John Paul II, “*The Priest Should be the Leaven in the Nigerian Society of Today*”, in *L'Osservatore Romano* English Edition, March-April 1982, pp. 11-12.

54 A.N.O. Ekwunife, *Renewal of Priestly Life and Ministry: The Nigerian Experience*, Nigeria-Enugu: Snaap Press, 1995, pp. 58-81.

55 *Ibid.*, pp. 58-81.

to show us that a lot need to be done in our formation houses. Realizing the nature of formation that remains almost the same in style since the early missionary era, Professor Ekwunife continued:

Priestly formation still retains its ambivalent character even in modern Africa. The unchangeable elements are sought along some imaginary foreign ideals that are counter productive to priests after their formation. But, glaring changes can be observed in the number of intake, expansion of visible structures and recruitment of qualified professors. However, what is actually needed is an integrated formation, which takes cognizance of resilient and relevant African traditional values for a wholesome formation of future Church leaders in Africa⁵⁶.

Succinctly put, this quotation helps to explain the *drame* of our thesis, a training that lacks purpose and contextual objective. This is because it has been like that from the beginning, hence, the inability to visualize the existential practical problems of the existing style of formation that is alienated from the concrete lives of the people. Many other African theologians, mainly clergy Professors like Chukwudum B. Okoro in his book, *The Igbo Church and Quest For God*, A. Shorter, in his book, *African Culture and the Christian Church*⁵⁷, Cecil MacGarry, S.J., a white Jesuit Missionary Priest and the former Principal of Hekimma Theological College in Nairobi, Kenya, being presented in *AFER* as an expert at the African Synod, in his article titled, “*Formation of the Agents of Evangelization For the Realities of Africa Today: Its Urgency and Importance*”⁵⁸, some of whom had either taught or being the major seminary rectors, have all written to condemn the nature of formation in some of our seminaries that cannot help much in practical situations, especially in the use of authority and poor collaboration.

2. Analysis

After a careful reflection over the above presentation, we will notice that effective collaboration is lacking almost in all the sectors presented due to the nature of the existing ecclesiology in Igbo Churches that is Western oriented and is yet to be incarnated as to be part of the people’s life structure. On the other hand, the Igbo Catholic Christians are still

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 58-81.

⁵⁷ Cf. A. Shorter, *African Culture and the Christian Church*, London: Dublin: Geoffrey Chapman, 1973.

⁵⁸ C. MacGarry, “*Formation of the Agents of Evangelization For the Realities of Africa Today: Its Urgency and Importance*”, in *AFER*, Aug./Oct./Dec. 1999, pp. 195-209.

very much influenced at the deeper levels of their cultural identity of communal life that is part of their traditional religious heritage, which Christianity has not yet broken through. This type of situation affects the nature of the existing ecclesiology that lacks proper inculturation. Should this type of Church continue to be our model of ecclesia in Igboland, African continent? Must we continue to operate on foreign transferred image of administration and being Church that is disassociated from the people's way of life, a model that reduces human being to "mere stooge or robot", a situation where power becomes autocratic in the house of God? Absolutely no! There is need for a change.

We must be certain that what works fairly well in one country, for example, could be damaging to another country when it is transferred without properly being inculturated. For instance, we know well that "all Christian authority is based on theological models: concepts of Church, ministry, hierarchy and so on, that vary according to age and culture". Munachi Ezeogu, a Nigerian theologian, attributed the cause to what he calls a "lopsided theology" that resulted to a missionary strategic practice "that emphasized not dialogue but authority, not love but power". Following its nature of operation, one tends to see it as "one-dimensional Christianity" borne out of an unbalanced theology that lays emphasis on vertical relationship (with God alone) that is disassociated from horizontal dimension (relationship that deals with people and their cultural values). Under such situation, the abuses of authority can be traced to the fact that the theology, especially the theology of the Church, laity and ministry that underlies the exercise of authority is inappropriate, outmoded, Pre-Vatican II, and inadequate⁵⁹. Nevertheless, the dynamic nature of the Church makes her to be seasoned as it periodically reviews and renews her teachings with time. But the situation demands an improvement in the existing ecclesiology. Vatican II, for example, improved on the teachings of Trent and Vatican I in the notion of ministry by putting forward for the present age a "*ministerial collegiality*" model of Papal and Episcopal authority and "*common priesthood*" of the faithful who are expected to work in a communal collaboration, in effective participation. All these are "based on the renewed theology of the Church that is enshrined in the Council's documents. However, in view of the above observation, we have the following points for our analysis: (1) Clergy-laity

59 D. Lonsdale's ideal is quoted in F.E. Okon, *Op. cit.*, p. 325.

collaboration: effect of poor leadership, (2) Conflict of worship: poor inculturation, (3) Effects on seminary formation, (4) Salient points of the observation and (5) final conclusion.

2.1 The problem of leadership

Modernity has brought openness to the world. Some situations could be uncomfortable for the head that wears the crown or the mantle of authority. In our society today, there are riots, strikes and boycotts in institutions of learning. Pickets parade with signs, banners, protesting against the decisions of a President or Governors of States. Public manifestations of civil disobedience are engaged in the masses of people as signs of dissatisfaction in the arbitrary use of authority, power. In the ecclesiastical cycle, the same resistance and conflict do exist between Bishops and priests, priests and their parishioners, religious superiors and their members as observed. When such situations arise, especially when the issue comes from the top as seen in our observation, there will be nobody else to run to because they are dealing with the final judge who can do and undo. Thank God that these uncalled for behaviours have not been all that vocal or published to avoid scandal, unlike in Europe and America where “the problem is complicated by the publicity given in the news media to protest against authority”⁶⁰. However, for them, that is perhaps one of the best options, such issues could be handled.

The “power nature” of the Church today is indebted to centuries-old patterns, and two patterns are responsible for this: the influence of the Roman power and the feudal structure that affect the local ecclesia. Through them, the Church assumed societal hierarchical titles, customs, expressions and symbols. The Roman and feudal style of power in the Church that was planted in Africa, the cause of our *drame* in Igboland, constitutes one of the principle sources of conflict within the rising consciousness of human rights and spirit of collaboration we are worried about today. The authoritarian system of dividing the community of the faithful into two, the commanding few and the unquestioningly obeying group majority should therefore be erased in our dioceses, parishes, seminaries and religious communities. This has to do with the nature of the existing ecclesiology that

60 H. J. O’Connel (ed.), Putting Vatican II into Practice, Catholic Living Series, Volume Seven, Liguori: Redemptorist Fathers Press, 1966, page n.a..

needs to review its structural administrative relationship among the agents of evangelization.

The problem is more felt where there is an existing discord between the clergy and the laity in relation to pastoral ministries in some dioceses and parishes in terms of collaboration due to the existing nature of ecclesiology. One could consider poor administrative care in terms of human relationship, as playing a vital role when considering our problem of discussion. This, no doubt, portrays the limited experience of some of us priests in the managerial ability. It is not good for one to be jack-of-all-trades. Specialization is important for progress and mutual relationship in every endeavour. But how is this observed in the running of the Church in Igboland in relation to laity-clergy participation?

Reflecting on the problems confronting the Nigerian-Igbo Church, Teresa Okure, SHCJ, classified it under interpersonal relationships following her survey and evaluation processes. Top on the list in this category is the lack of effective leadership at the diocesan and parish levels. She reflected from the viewpoint of maintaining originality not only in one's life-style but also in the spirit of incarnating the word of God with the culture coupled with the ability to disseminate the administration of the Church's activities to reach others. She regrets the existence of disunity that is visible in the Church among the hierarchy who should rather be in the lead. No doubt, such ugly situations have their consequences that really affect the Church today. We really need to review the nature of our leadership role if we are to be honest to ourselves. This is where it is pertinent to reflect more on the anthropological nature of the people's live that has to do with administration and human relationship, and which of cause, is in consonant with the practice of inculturation.

Power or authority in Igbo culture is seen as "an instrument of service to the people and not for their domination. The leader (family, village or town level) is accountable both

to the ancestors and to the people”⁶¹. Igbo people prefer “constituted, but not imposed authority”⁶². Following the communal need of the people, authority is exercised at different levels stressing from nuclear family (of father, mother and children) to an extended family system (of *umunna* clan) - these are people of the same ancestral lineage. Normally, the oldest man of the clan or village is charged with the responsibility of leading and directing affairs: presiding over internal cases that affect the members as a living representative of the ancestors, but this must not be at the expense of others, rather, in collaboration with the community spirit. For an effective administration of the Gospel message through inculturation we really need a dialogue between the culture of the people and Christianity. There is also need for a good understanding among the seminary formators and the formed; a *rappont* among the Bishops, the Superiors and their priests, through effective collaboration among all the agents of evangelization. Through this way, the gospel message enriches and is enriched by the good values of the culture that receives it.

2.2 Conflict of worship: poor inculturation

Reference to culture can only be possible when there is a mutual understanding between Christianity and African traditional religion that receives it. What it means is that nature of ecclesiology has to reflect this view. That many members of the Church turn to traditional religions and use traditional magic or charms in times of crisis poses a major challenge to the modern priest and all the other members of evangelization, especially the Igbo theologians, to re-examine their style of evangelization and the existing ecclesiology. Even holy water, medals and scapulars are fast becoming protective charms, as the clergy-laity collaborative spirit that should exist is not all that the order of the day. It is not surprising that people hold on any principle of life that responds to their existential reality. Such actions of the believers are reflections of their existential needs bound within their traditional believe that antagonize their faith in the values posed by Catholicism.

61 P. Iroegbu, *Communism: towards Justice in Africa*, Nigeria-Owerri: International Universities Press, 1996. p. 25.

62 *Ibid.*, p. 25.

Today, faith is seen as an alternation of different beliefs: traditional worship, which is basic for many, worship in private indigenous prayer homes, where the traditional pattern of life is being realized, and worship in Catholic Church which, for some people, is just because they are born and baptised in it. In practice, one attends mass on Sundays, receives communion; on other days, one goes to consult a native doctor and, later, goes to sing alleluia at any prayer or Pentecostal house of one's interest. This means simply joining of different elements together without inter-relating them (compartmentality of belief). This dualistic problem of worship, practising of Christianity side-by-side with traditional religion by the same person, without proper harmony and integration, results in one's faith resting superficially. It is readily felt when there is crisis or great needs like severe sickness or inability to get issue(s), "constant death in the family or other acute tragedies, a lucky break in some venture or success in life. At such crises, his faith in the Christian God and morals seems to abandon him"⁶³. The unification of these is only by the personal experience of the believer, whose own diffused and undefined religiosity values these divergent spiritual expressions.

The main problem is that people want their worship to grow from their cultural way of life. It is suggested that the main cause for the sprouting of the sects has been a cultural dissatisfaction with the established Churches⁶⁴, especially the system of authority that prevails; in a situation where dialogue and mutual collaboration seem to be lacking, people feel that their presence in the main Church is not recognized, hence, the establishment of mushroom Churches. These offshoot Churches borrow a lot from culturally meaningful symbols that reflect collaboration and mutual understanding among the members. Each person is known by his/her name and feels accepted. Simplicity and humility before God are promoted, class distinctions and status disappear. The poor finds fellow-feeling, the rich becomes wise and open-minded, they sing and dance, a body movement, the whole being is involved, and collaboration is maintained among the members who work in harmony, etc⁶⁵. Actually, if we need to grow in communal worship, we have a lot to learn from their spirit

63 B.C. Okoro *Op. cit.*, p. 46.

64 Is. 5:7, quoted in J. Okoye, *A new Era of evangelization*, Nigeria-Ibadan: Ss. Peter and Paul Seminary Press, May 3, 1984, p. 33.

65 *Ibid.*, p.34.

of inculturation, spirit of togetherness. Culture cannot be reduced to a level of instrumental use, as its focus is always human beings who observe it by their openness to the ultimate. Much needs to be done to march up with this aspiring Christian faith, particularly in areas of a healthy collaboration or dialogue between Christian religion and traditional religious culture that looks inseparable from the lives of the people, if Christianity is to find its permanent root in Igboland of Nigeria.

These and other allied practices as enumerated above are the cultural challenges that confront the agents of evangelization. Understanding of these challenging issues will help for the integration of the African good values in the teaching of Christianity through sound catecheses as they engage in collaborative services. Through such understanding, the priest will be in a better position to apply more realistic and innovative evangelization to accommodate the actual situation of men and women who live through crucial changes in their individual social and religious lives, primarily, due to the fact that Christianity has not yet taken root within the culture of the people. Rather than being much influenced by every aspect of the culture, agents of evangelization must aim at evangelizing it, thereby borrowing valuable factors that will help to enhance Christianity through the process of inculturation. Faith-commitment will be encouraged instead of living a compartmentalized type of life. The Gospel of Christ must first have made home in the evangelizers (Col 3: 16) through their co-operative spirit of work⁶⁶ before its impact within the society.

2.3 Effect of the actual ecclesiology on seminary formation

The formative place for effective ecclesiology and the nurturing of the spirit of collaboration is supposed to be in the house of formation. What is taught here has to reflect the cultural lives of the people that should help to shape the nature of the present ecclesiology. But as presented in our observation above, this is not the situation apparently. Fundamentally, as we earlier stated, most of the above problems, especially the problem of poor collaboration expressed due to the use of authority, of hierarchy and of undeepened knowledge of the culture in view of pastoral challenges and the nature of ecclesiology, etc.,

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

could be accounted for, to some reasonable extent, owing to the nature of formation in the seminary. The main problem is related to the way the existing ecclesiology operates in Igboland. There is no doubt that the “authoritarian system” of forming the seminarians is having its after effect on their relationship (after the priest’s ordination) with the laity and their attitude toward their natural culture. These attitudes have their impact in the Church in terms of effective collaboration as it colours their perception of authority and power. These are explainable in the lives of the seminarians such as: situations where seminarians are brought up under a threatening and unhealthy atmosphere, situations where their rights are not guaranteed and they study under tension and intimidation that make them consciously or unconsciously imbibe these principles as they bear them patiently until they are finally ordained. Then, after their ordination and having been posted to work in a parish, they begin to implement them by practising their acquired authoritarian power with those placed under them like the laity and even their fellow priests. How would one collaborate with those he looks down on? There has to be a healthy relationship before we talk of collaboration, as we shall see later when we treat its theory.

It is not easy to exaggerate the lasting harm to the psyche of the seminarians, in relation to the substance of their culture, by the resultant cultural imperialism carried out during colonial era between 1700-1900 A.D. What is most unfortunate is that the products of this era, though indigenes, are still influenced by this tenet in their methodology of teaching and forming seminarians even till today. Onwuejeogwu and Isichei rather remarked that specifically among other things, “it has adversely affected the development of the seminarians’ languages, their sense of morality, their attitudes and mannerisms, thereby instilling in them deep inferiority feelings”⁶⁷.

It then becomes difficult to understand how seminarians can excel in these challenging demands of the culture in arts and literature when they were being brought up

⁶⁷ M. A. Onwuejeogwu, “*Evolutionary Trends in The History of the Development of the Igbo Civilization in the Culture theatre of Igboland in Southern Nigeria*” in *Ahajioku Lecture*, Nigeria-Owerri: Ministry of Information Publication, 1987, pp. 58-69; See also P.A.C. Isichei, “*Method in Evangelization in African Cultures*” in *Nigerian Journal of Theology*, Vol. 1, no. 4, Dec. 1988, p. 103.

under an unhealthy threatening and uncollaborative environment totally disassociated from their culture. A situation where they were thought theology that was devoid of the socio-cultural problems of the people they were meant to minister to, after their training. No wonder, up till today, the problem in the seminary formation still persists as the pioneers have continued the system of formation they received from their colonial early missionaries that was power enhancing and poor in inculturated collaboration and mutual understanding. Simply put, it is the problem of ecclesiology that is crying for the local incarnation of the Gospel message through inculturation.

This is almost an ingrained cultural alienation and rootlessness if after so many years of Christianity inheritance in Igboland of Nigeria, our seminarians are still taught to be foreign to their culture. We must not deny the fact that culture is one of the subjects in the Seminaries curricular, but the contention here is that those socio-cultural issues like communalism, ancestorship, administration, polygamy, chieftaincy, social welfare, name them, should be given priority, but unfortunately, they are not. There is always a conflict when the lives of the products of the early missionary are in contradiction to what applies in the concrete reality today. Professor Anthony Ekwunife observed above that they went through “contradictory experiences of what was supposed to be and what actually was taught them”. There is conflict when the formed in the seminary cannot collaborate and function effectively with the people they are meant to serve. There is conflict and poor collaboration when people are not given the respect due to them or the right perspective. There is no doubt that such a situation poses a challenge to the nature of ecclesiology that affects pastoral applications.

Implicit in this system of formation is a dichotomy between the philosophy of life in the seminary and what obtains in the village and towns where the students will later be sent to work as priests, pastorally. Under such a situation, the expelled ones find it difficult to adjust in the society because the training they got was quite different from what obtains in reality. This type of training leaves little or no room for collaboration, the understanding spirit that should prevail between the seminarians and their formators, is occasionally falsified and brutalized by some lecturers. Thus, it ends up leaving a parish priest/pastor

almost helpless when he is confronted with existential cultural problems in the field of actuality. These teething problems call for reorientation in the seminary teaching, in our present day ecclesiology. There is need for a good existence of collaboration and the spirit of dialogue for a healthy local ecclesiology, and vice versa. James Okoye C.S.Sp. remarks that Christ's spirit of passion should "lead priests to grapple with the life situations and problems of Africa and her people...For this, seminary programs are to be restructured in order to give priests better training in the dynamics and strategies for all exclusive evangelization"⁶⁸. Continuing on this, he insists that their entire training must soak them in the values of the people and produce in their soul a salvific identification through love and collaboration. In a social domain, the priest must know how to awaken and sustain the responsibility of the laity they work with, promoting self-reliance and going to the root causes of problems more than handing out relief⁶⁹.

The truth of missionary evangelization is "to understand and be understood" and to work in collaboration that demands dynamic functionality through mutual dialogue. Dialogue between Christian religion and the culture of the people is of vital importance for the building up of a healthy ecclesiology. In turn, the Christian community will have qualitative Christians who are committed to their faith by working for the realization of the kingdom of God on earth. Following what is presented in our observation, the reverse is the case. This is the crux of the problem because the attitude of imposition is continued after the early missionaries. What is worse, the seminarians were taught to obey and to depend on the higher authority; they were not encouraged to question or to take initiatives in order to take their places as mature children of the God's kingdom on earth. They, even in the present time, are trained to be self-centred as they consolidate their positions at the expense of others. Rather they were given a formation that is seen as something to be received and not a process of growth to maturity to which they committed themselves in order to be responsible for the life and future mission of the Church. This is the situation where Cecil MacGarry, S.J., a white Jesuit Missionary Priest holds: "it is well known that education and

68 J. Okoye, "The Ministry and Life of Presbyters in the Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops" in A.N. Ekwunife et al.(eds.), Renewal of Priestly Life and Ministry: The Nigerian Experience., Nigeria-Enugu: Snaap Press, 1995, p 23.

69 *Ibid.*, p. 6.

formation can be used to tame and domesticate people or to liberate them.”⁷⁰ If we look closely at the presented scenes in the observation, we have no doubt to conclude that the nature of education given to our seminarians is primarily aimed at domestication.

This is almost an ingrained cultural alienation and rootlessness if after so many years of Christianity inheritance in Igboland of Nigeria, our seminarians are still taught to be foreign to their culture and to behave indifferently, even among themselves. What moral teaching is a professor imparting to seminarians when he will persuade the prefects to write against their fellow students in the nature of making remarks or observations? What moral teaching are our priests portraying when they cannot even live and work together harmoniously? What type of ecclesiology do we have if the spirit of collaboration due to good human relationship at all levels is lacking among the Igbo Christians who should relate as people of God’s family?

2.4 Salient points of the observation

Generally, from our research observation, we are able to note the following positive and negative points on the structural practices of the Church in Africa, Igboland mainly; beginning with the positive.

2.4.1 Positive admirable aspects

In view of the above presentation, the following aspects are the deemed positive aspects of our finding.

- No doubt, there is a rapid growth of the Church in terms of numerical strength in the southern side (Igboland) of Nigeria; but also flourished with sects and Pentecostals.
- There is vocation boom for priesthood and religious life, year in year out respectively; some people attribute this to the existence of the “sociological condition” of the people.

70 C. MacGarry, “*Formation of the Agents of Evangelization For the Realities of Africa Today: Its Urgency and Importance*” in *AFER*, Aug./Oct./Dec., 1999, pp. 195-209.

- Lay people are boldly studying theology and catechetics now with the view of playing their committed role in the present day growth of the Church, if they are given the empowerment due to them to shine.
- The tinted adaptive spirit of inculturation, especially, on the aspect of bodily worship and the use of vernacular in the Igbo liturgy is gradually in vogue.
- Youths are always ready to collaborate with the clergy when their apostolate contributions are acknowledged and encouraged.
- There exist, no doubt, the devoted spirit of the clergy and some zealous laity, in spite of the condition to evangelize and to shoulder the responsibility for the growth of the Church, particularly, in the eastern and western side of Nigeria.
- Igbo traditional society has been blessed with a family life that is essentially spiritual oriented, disciplined, honest, communal, hard-working, peace loving, and in short, endowed with a high sense of morality which needs to be explored in our ecclesia.
- Young and dynamic lecturers are gradually being trained out to face the challenges of seminary formation, but they demand the necessary freedom to sell their goods.

2.4.2 Negative or problematic aspects

- There is apparently a structural problem in the existing nature of our local ecclesiology as analysed in Igboland of Nigeria (and Africa in general) due to the nature of the early evangelization that is still prevalent. The forms of formation and spirituality in our religious institutions and Church activities generally are foreign oriented and as such, cannot fully inspire the local community for real growth.
- Problem of collaboration and co-operation among the agents of evangelization. This is because the “inherited hierarchical, clerical and institutional model of Church still dominates”. It is the “historical affirmation that the Church in its doctrinal and sacramental structures are founded in divine revelation” (i.e. “Pyramidal Pre-Concilia” European model structure operation, creating first class and second class members in God’s ecclesiastical domain). For “many Christian Africans, this model of adapted Church minimizes the active role of the laity and the African sense of community and participation of all believers”.

- Problem in the use of authority: ways of conceiving and exercising of power at the expense of the voiceless and less privileged ones, experienced both in politics and in religious communities respectively.

- Authoritarian teaching and administrative methods prevailing in the major seminaries that threaten the life vocation of seminarians when they challenge certain unjust structures that affect them personally; “seminarians seem to be in bondage”. This is due to fear of being misunderstood by the Professors or by the authorities; hence, they resort to be silent on the issues that affect them, just to be “Yes father students).

- Lack of respect for individual personality and acknowledgement of charisms at all levels of our discussion. Poor spirit of dialogue and encouragement of awareness and commitment to lay ministry in our parishes. Poor system of employment policies at parish levels, mainly.

- Clergy lacks of trust on the laity in terms of co-responsibility as they see the latter as uninformed to handle certain delicate functions like diocesan or parish finance. The “Church in Igboland is challenged to be more a communion of believers at the service of the society and to accentuate less the institutional model of being Church”.

- Problem of inculturation. Poor dialogue between Christianity and traditional religion: the Gospel message is yet to be rooted into the cultural life of the people. The Church as it stands is “failing to be truly leaven for the transformation of the entire society”. The problem is the “defective ecclesiology and missionary methods of the nineteenth century that resulted in African missions that continue to be at great risk of never becoming fully local Churches”.

- Many Igbo Christians are still influenced by their cultural traditional religion that affect their true faith-commitment in the Gospel message.

- Mushroom autonomous Churches are springing up from Catholic Church and spreading rapidly all over in Igboland, mainly from those who feel frustrated from the traditional way of teaching and administering.

- Poor relationship existing in some places among the Catholics and other Christian denominations on things of common interest.

3. Conclusion

We have come to the end of this edifice that concentrates on the functions and processes of observation, analysis and dynamism of our *drame*. As it reflects on practical theology (praxiology), its treatment here is given wider scope to embrace human inter-relationship in the dioceses of Igboland. Our presentation has shown that the nature of ecclesiology in Igboland as in Africa, needs to be improved to match up with not only the growing strength of numerical members, but more importantly, the inculturated spirit that should prevail. In Africa in general and Igboland in particular, missionary nature of evangelization as we shall see, was wrapped up in colonialism. In the words of Jomo Kenyatta: “When the missionaries arrived, the Africans had the land and the missionaries had the bible. They taught us how to pray with our eyes closed. When we opened them, they had the land and we had the bible”⁷¹. The problem is centred around the nature of the existing ecclesiology where the bible message is supposed to be proclaimed to the people within their culture. It has been observed that feudalistic influences play a lot on the spirit of collaboration that has not been effective in view of today’s nature of being Church as inherited from the early missionaries. This is the nature of ecclesiology where clericalism operates under the auspices of asymmetrical life of superior-inferior, commander-obedience, master-servant relationships. It is still lingering up till today in Igboland in all the above observed sectors, thereby having its consequences on pastoral collaboration among the people of God.

Suffice it to say that colonialism and Christianity totally “demilitarized and demasculated many areas of African culture like Igboland. In the vague of colonialism, Igbos were put to “fear with the use of gun fire of the maxim rifles”, so that they could not resist western culture forced on them in the nature of evangelization, hence, the imposition of authority. Christianity on the other hand, “demasculated us through the preaching of hell fire. It asked us to turn the other cheek where original ancestors took up the spear and the arrow”⁷², in defence of the cultural heritage in the history. Realizing the situation of our

71 Cited in L. Mbefo, *Op. cit.*, p. 97.

72 A.M. Ali, “*The Resurrection of the Warrior Tradition in African Political Culture*” in Mbefo, *Ibid.*, p. 102.

present ecclesiology, Professor Luke Mbefo, an Igbo theologian, remarked thus: “the missionaries have left us Christianity in order to prevent us from reaching maturity”. Then he continued, if we should go by the account of those who studied in Europe, “Europeans no longer find Christianity viable and Church-going unbecoming for the man-come-of-age, why must we continue to live by this elegant anachronism?”⁷³ It is in view of dissatisfaction of the practice in the Catholic Church that has made many people to be sceptical, others turning to be secularists or promoters of African traditional religion in reverence to the ancestors, even the enlightened elites. “The centre can no longer hold”, in the words of Chinue Achebe, an Igbo novelist, as “everything has fallen apart”. Life is in isolation, no spirit of collaboration or communal sharing. People have scattered in search of reality in the spirit of isolationism as against communalism, the central hold of Igbo unity.

People’s reaction of turning to traditional observances like the use of charms, reference to the ancestors are sure signs that something has to be done on the maintenance of the western Christianity that needs to be ‘decolonized’⁷⁴ in order to have their own local ecclesiology. In the words of Professor Barnabas Okoro, we need our originality. And for Bishop Okoye:

Our work as indigenous clergy can no longer be the mere repetition of what the missionaries were doing. In fact, it cannot even be the mere handling on the torch of the faith nor its proclamation to those who have heard it. We must now go a step further; we must launch into the deep. Where they planted we must now water; what they acquired we must now consolidate and stabilize⁷⁵.

This idea of our elder confrere, late Okoye, which implies inculturation of the Gospel message, is actually what this thesis is out to achieve, through the spirit of collaboration. We need to look into the cultural system of administration and community life of sharing and working in collaboration and explore these for the growth of the message we have inherited. This, however, does not exclude exploring good values from wherever these may come from, to enriching our cultural heritage. This has to be worked out by the agents of evangelization, the people of God in Igboland, by given due

73 L. Mbefo, *Op. cit.*, p. 103.

74 Cited in *Ibid.*, p. 101.

75 G. M. P. Okoye quoted in Golden Jubilee Celebration, (1924-1974) and cited in L. Mbefo, *Ibid.*, p. 100.

consideration to the cultural lives of the people through the application of inculturation. Healthy inculturation prepares a good and fertilized ground for local ecclesiology. The existing ecclesiology is foreign oriented and Pre-Vatican II.

Thus, we need a new ecclesiology where the clergy and the laity are called to collaborate for effective administration of the Church. Collaboration here means the ability of the clergy to work co-operatively with the laity from the planning stage to the execution of programmes and projects, especially those areas the laity should be involved in. It is not wise that any group be excluded at the level of the planning stage, where decisions are finally taken, only to be called in at the stage of execution. It would diminish their sense of responsibility for the task that is being undertaken and reduce them to the level of second grade involvement in it⁷⁶. Unfortunately, what we saw above in our observation reveals the fact that there is problem where these evangelizers have wantonly turn apart by what we may call “personalized life” that rarely accepts compromise, unless in conformity with one persons opinion at the expense of many others. This shows a lack of interdependent relationship between a bishop in a local Church and his priests, together with the laity. It is a sure signal that our present ecclesiology needs to be revealed. Its way of implementation, especially, administratively, is the main cause of poor collaboration among evangelizers.

Perhaps, this is why, after reviewing the nature of historical evangelization in Africa, the Special Assembly for African Synod of Bishops has proposed that the image of the Church in her continent must seriously be improved to reflect the cultural life of the people. We need to work and relate as brothers and sisters of the same family of God.

Evangelization is essentially an intercultural process. Church, “by the virtue of her mission and nature, is bound to no particular form of human culture” (G.S 42). The lived Gospel never existed outside the reality of a given culture – hence, “faith that does not become culture is a faith that has not been fully accepted, not thoroughly thought, not faithfully lived” (John Paul II). To live out the faith in Nigeria, which is in relationship

76 J. Aniagwu, Collaboration Ministry, Priests, Sisters and Brothers, Nigeria-Ibadan: Daily Graphics Printing, 2001, p. 29.

with its family model of ecclesia, there is the need to explore in Igboland the use of traditional system of administration and use of authority that compromises to dialogue and collaboration. In the words of Uzukwu, its leaders are therefore called upon to adopt the leadership style like the traditional family fathers, who, in anticipation of their eventful admission into the cult of ancestors, commit themselves to the life of truth and uprightness, sharing, life of simplicity and communal collaboration.

Here is a thoughtful question: what does an inculturated ecclesia mean in the communal relationship between the clergy and the laity in their collaborative evangelization and how relevance will this be in the dynamic movement of the Igbo Church? This thesis is out to propose a contextual ecclesia that will help to accommodate the cultural lives of the Igbos as a possible alternative to the present one that has outlived its essence in history. This is where we present ‘family ecclesia of the people of God’. If we really want to form a Church that is God’s family as desired by the ‘Spirit of *umunna*’ – (African cultural spirit of communalism), or after the tone of Vatican II, current Magisterial views of ecclesiology and the thoughtful minds of the African Synod Fathers, that will be more meaningful to the people, we should be prepared for a change. Change here means the ability to review the present existing structure that places the role of laity as an appendage to the clerical function. A change where a diocesan bishop, priests and laity have the sense of the Church as a “community of persons rather than a person for the community”; a change where authority and power will be exercised after the model of Christ in the spirit of service and love. To effectuate this change, we need to have a clear knowledge of the theory of collaboration, dialogue and inculturation as they can work together in helping us to interpret our *drame* and to make meaningful reflections.

PART TWO: INTERPRETATION

INTERDISCIPLINARY REFLECTION ON THE PROBLEM OF COLLABORATION

Having been confronted with the above problem as observed in the first part, especially on the clergy-laity relationship following the nature of the prevailing ecclesiology, we shall try to interpret the observed problem of collaboration from four main parts: through three relevant theories (inculturation, dialogue and collaboration), African anthropological view point, missiological and theological perspectives. The theories will enlighten us more on the interpretation as well as on the application of intervention. In the treatment of the African anthropology, we will reveal the characteristic lives of the Africans, particularly the Igbos before the early missionary evangelization and it will be followed by the nature of the early missionary evangelization. As it were, this chapter will complement our analysis and reflection as observed in part one.

On the theological reflection, we shall touch on the New Testament to see how Christ related with the Apostles during his time and how it was continued after him by the early Christians. In this chapter, we will present the contributions of Councils of Trent and Vatican II on the areas that are implicated in our subject matter, up to the period of Pope Paul II. We shall then blend the view of our reflection with the cultural thought of a prominent Igbo theologian, Eugene Elochukwu Uzoukwu, among others, which will help to throw more light on the issue of “clergy-laity” relationship in Africa and particularly, in Igboland. The pertinent question is: what will history offer us with regards to clergy-laity relationship, following the anthropological worldview of the Africans, the theological and the traditional Church structure? This part of interpretation will act as a mirror through which we could understand clearly the central question of our analysis: lack of collaboration among the agents of evangelization and poor inculturation that reflect in the existing nature of the Igbo ecclesiology. Such a grounding question demands a further reflection on our present ecclesiology, a quest for a new model of being Church. We shall begin our reflection with the three theories which constitute the cue of the Gospel incarnation.

CHAPTER III

THE THEORIES OF INCULTURATION, DIALOGUE AND COLLABORATION AS THE GROUNDING FACTORS FOR EFFECTIVE EVANGELIZATION

Announcing the Gospel to all the earth is inconceivable without inculturation which is understood to be the encounter of the Gospel with all cultures of the world, or better still, the encounter of the Good news with all the people of the earth through the instrumentality of their culture¹.

In view of our analysed observation that somehow affects the healthy practice of collaboration due to the nature of ecclesiology within the cultural milieu of the Igbos, we have chosen to reflect more on some relevant theories to see what light they will throw on our examined situation. As our topic touches on collaboration that knits with dialogue (its process) and inculturation that incarnates the Gospel message, we are dedicating three different but coherent parts of this chapter to these theories that will help us handle our observed problem as they interrelate. They are: (1) theory of inculturation, (2) theory of dialogue, and (3) theory of collaboration. The final conclusion that will demonstrate their interrelatedness will then follow. These theories will guide as our mirrors when we reflect further on the dissertation problem. For clarity of purpose, we shall begin with the theory of inculturation that helps to give the Gospel message a local face.

1. The theory of inculturation

It is unfortunate that despite the initial attempts to inculturate the Gospel message since Vatican II, the Church communities in Igboland still appear foreign and sometimes colonial to the local people² the growing population notwithstanding. Realizing the history of the early evangelization today, Igboland in particular needs the type of mission that is

1 Second Extraordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, "*Ecclesia Sub Verbo Dei Mysteria Christi Celebrans Pro Salute Mundi, Relatio Finalis*", ii, D, 4, 1985, in M. Brown, The African Synod, Documents, Reflections, Perspectives, Maryknoll (NY): Orbis Books, 1996, p. 17.

2 Reports from many Fathers of the Synod and feed backs from Local Churches in respect of the given 80 questions concerning the extent of evangelization in Africa did prove that the message is yet to touch the core lives of Africans as imbedded in their culture.

integral and dialogal. It should be integral in the sense that the Gospel message should permeate all aspects of the people's lives: religion, economic, political, cultural, social, and so on. This implies a theology of evangelization that holds in creative tension between the material and spiritual aspects of the people's lives and views them as complementary. Dialogical, as opposed to monological, means that evangelization should be concerned not only with the giving of Christian message to the people but also with how the people's context shapes the interpretation of Christianity and its message³. We will be primarily concerned here with that of inculturation, which we have chosen to handle under the following points: (1) the concept of inculturation; (2) inculturation in the bible, (3) inculturation in the African context, (4) inculturation in the Nigerian context, (5) qualities of the agent of inculturation, and (6) the essence of inculturation.

1.1 The concept of inculturation

Applying inculturation within the context of mission, Pedro Arrupe, the Superior of the Society of Jesus in 1974, presented it in one of their general meetings as an effort which fills the "Church through the incarnation of the Gospel message and values, to take form in terms of every culture in such a way that the faith and Christian life of every local Church are inserted into their cultural framework in a very intimate and profound manner as possible"⁴. To understand this use of intimacy and profounder of the relationship that should exist between a receiving culture and the Christian religion, Ary Roest Crolius, a theologian, prefers to use the word: "integration" to express the role of inculturation. This means the integration of the Christian experience of Jesus Christ into the culture of its people, in such a way that this experience, not only expresses itself in elements of this culture, but also becomes a force that animates, orients and innovates this culture so as to create a new unity and communion, not only within the culture in question but also as an

3 J. S. Ukpong, "Towards a Renewed Approach to Inculturation Theology", in Journal of Inculturation Theology, Nigeria- Port Harcourt: Publication of the Catholic Institute of West Africa, 1994, Vol. 1, No. 1, pp. 33-34.

4 P. Arrupe, "Letter on Inculturation", in PIME, March 1982, p. 86.

enrichment of the universal Church⁵. These two working definitions of inculturation maintain two main key words: “*incarnation*” (Arrupe) and “*integration*” (Crollius). Following this process of intimacy that is expressed as “incarnation and integration”, Monsignor J. Zoa projects further results, not only on the receiving culture but more on the life-style of the people being evangelized. Hence, incarnation and integration result to “*transmission*” of values through “*assimilation*” and finally, there is in practice “*re-expression*” of the new acquired values.

Roest-Crollius, insisting on *deepness* of *integration*, makes the following observations: “*acculturation*” and “*interculturalization*”⁶ stand at the first stage of inculturation (seen at the level of adaptation or *acclimatization*) and the second stage is “*reorientation*”, while the third stage is “*transformation*” of the cultural life of the people. He then summarized these three moments as “*translation*”, “*assimilation*” and “*transformation*” through “*re-expression*”, while the entire process of inculturation is one of “*integration*”. Integration is the cue meaning of the Christian faith and life in a given culture⁷.

D.M. McGavran says: “at the stages of integration and re-expression are the periods that major adaptations take place”. For him, “The hard problem is to make the Church Christian, to communicate the essential gospel, to prevent *Christopaganism* from developing”⁸. This is impossible without the Church taking the language of the culture. Thus, the underlying factor in the above definitions is the word “*insertion*” (integration) in terms of the new values (of the Gospel) into a culture it comes into contact with, to generate a meaning and new ways of doing things (being Church). The words *insertion*,

5 Cf. A.A. Roest-Crollius, *What is so New about Inculturation*, Rome: Gregorian Press, 1978, p. 59; Walliggo, et al., *Inculturation: Its Meaning and Urgency*, Nairobi: St. Paul's Publications, 1986, p. 11; Cf., A.J. Chupungco, *Cultural Adaptation of the Liturgy*. New York: Paulist Press, 1982, p. 43; See also his French text, *Inculturation: L'Évangile dans la rencontre des cultures* in *Riflessioni*, 1988, p. 22.

6 Cf. R. A. A. Roest-Crollius, *Op. cit.*, pp. 133-134. Here he regards interculturalization as “a process by which individuals or groups interact when they identify themselves as culturally distinct”.

7 *Ibid.*, pp. 133-134.

8 D.M. McGavran, “*The Adaptation-Syncretism Axis*” in T. Yamamori & C.R. Taber (eds.), *Christopaganism or Indigenous Christianity?* South Pasadena Publication, 1975, p. 230 f, quoted in A. A. Roest-Crollius, *Op. cit.*, p. 133.

integration and *incarnation* can be very useful when the gospel message comes in contact with a new culture only when the agents of evangelization are well acculturated or enculturated.

The fact is that multiple terms like “*adaptation*” “*accommodation*”, “*acculturation*”, “*indigenization*”, “*contextualization*”, and even “*enculturation*”, have all been used in one period or the other in the history of the Church to designate the root taking of the Gospel message and all these preceded “*incarnation*” and “*inculturation*”; owing to their shortcomings, these earlier terms are not so much used, or as universally accepted as *incarnation* and *inculturation* through *integration* in today’s ecclesiology. Although, some theologies still do refer to the term “contextualization” that involves reconstruction (African) and liberation (Latin American) theologies. All of these are geared toward the actualization of the mystical body of Christ (incarnation and inculturation) within the cultures that receive it. Inculturation concentrates with the insertion of the Church within a culture. According to Aylward Shorter, an African theologian, “culture refers to the various patterns through which human beings think, act and feel”. It is the “prism” through which people view their whole outlook of life experience. It is, as Geert Hofstede calls it, “the software of the mind”, the “shared mental package” that helps to programme our perception and our behaviour⁹.

However, recapitulating as it were, the above variant definitions, we shall have our working definition of inculturation as a deeper process that can be described as *incarnation, insertion, or integration, assimilation* and *re-expression* by which Church becomes part of a given society as it aims at immersing acquired values (Christianity) within a given culture. This means that it is a process by which Christianity is lived, expressed and communicated in a given culture as it enters into dialogue with it, being deeply rooted within its system, and at the same time, opens up to the enrichment of the universal Church. It is perhaps from this perspective that some African theologians hold

9 Cf. A. Shorter, Towards a Theology of Inculturation, Maryknoll (NY): Orbis Books, 1992.

that inculturation, by its nature, is relevant to all countries that encounter the Good News, which as it were, projects the original view of inculturation as spelt out in the bible.

1.2. Reference of inculturation in the bible

God always addresses His people through their cultural life. The word of God itself, does not come as an abstract message, but as an event in a history that involves socio-political, besides strictly cultural, dimensions. In the Old Testament, the word of God is received through the culture of the Israelites. It was addressed to a group of people who had a cultural world-view, ritual and social structures of their own. This culture embodies already a first founding revelation of the world in the creation of both the cosmos and the human.¹⁰ . In the light of the contemporary experience of inculturation, the Old Testament shows us how humanity was providentially prepared to receive a universal Saviour.

In the New Testament, inculturation is seen as the continuation of the Old Testament history of salvation. We find this in the incarnation: “the word became flesh and dwelt among us” (Jn.1:14). This is a historical flesh marked by space and time, life and death, joy and sorrow, entered into cultural dialogue within contextual situations. Inculturation took place when Christ incarnated himself in the Jewish cultural background. Through this process of flesh taken, the “word” of God purified and enriched the culture of the Jews who began to express their faith and carry out their obligations in a new and original way. By doing so, the good values of their culture are being transformed and integrated in the new religion (Christianity) as Christ’s salvific values are being inserted into their culture. Thus, on seeing Jesus Christ, “the carpenter’s son” (Matt. 13:55), we can imagine the glory and the love of God, the fulfilment of the salvific history. The word of God culturally took flesh and manifested the power of God on earth as a Saviour of all humanity in cultures (Cf. John 1:14). This means that for the word of God to take root, it must be inculturated, meaning that it has to be concretely oriented to the life of the people

10 M. Amaladoss, Dialogue and Inculturation as Practised in India, Bangalore:: Dharmaram Publications, 1992, p. 6.

within their cultural world-view. For it is only when the people have incarnated Christ's message in their cultural milieu that it will transform them.

The missionary mandate (Matt. 28: 19), the Pentecost event (Acts 2: 4), the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7), and the variety of ritual traditions in history, all go to indicate the evolutionary process of inculturation. The adaptations during the apostolic and patristic period and the birth of the Church history show also an act of inculturation. Take for instance, the early Church community that moved from the Jewish to the Hellenic world and the members felt it necessary to inculturate the message and to share out responsibilities (cf. Acts 6: 1-6). It is the same process of missionary evangelization through the mandate given to the apostles that eventually reached African continent.

1.3 Inculturation in the African context

After, the independence of many African countries, the African Bishops saw the address of Paul VI to them in Uganda in 1969 as a challenge to think of originality in terms of "*Africanization*" whereby, "Africa must have its own theology, its own philosophy, its own liturgy, and, on certain points, its ecclesiastical discipline."¹¹ In his address, Paul VI pointed out the importance of not only incarnating the Gospel message, but also for the Africans to begin to think of African Christianity: An adaptation of the Christian life in the fields of pastoral, ritual, didactic and spiritual activities is not only possible, it is even favoured by the Church. The liturgical renewal is a living example of this. And in this sense, you may and you must have African Christianity.¹²

Adaptation as a process of inculturation aims at integrating the local and social customs in terms of liturgical rituals. Inculturation by its nature is a deeper process that can be described as applied incarnation, which aims at "immersing Christianity in African culture just as Jesus became man, so must Christianity become African"¹³. The Gospel of Jesus is addressed to a people in a particular culture in which they live and the Christian message is

11 Cardinal Malula, "*The Church at the Hour of Africanisation*" in *AFER*, 16 (1964), 365-371. 367.

12 Cited in A. Shorter, *African Culture and the Christian Church*, London, Chapman, 1973, p. 219.

13 M. Amaladoss, *Op. cit.*, p. 4.

in continuous dialogue with this culture thereby growing in the new faith. Reverend Engelbert Mveng, an African theologian, refers to inculturation as “the evangelization of African culture in such a way as to enable it to be integrated into the eternal Christian heritage and to continue to make this heritage more “Catholic”. One may ask: why “re-evangelization”? Was the first missionary evangelization unfruitful? We shall come to this later.

Thus, during the Pan-African Conference of African theologians, organized by the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT), which was held in Accra, Ghana, in 1977, the “inculturation model” was considered to be the best approach for the incarnation of the gospel message.¹⁴ Inculturation by its nature is “a theological imperative arising from incarnational exigency”¹⁵. Pope Paul VI realized the importance of inculturation for the effective propagation of faith in a given culture, when he noted thus:

Evangelization loses much of its force and effectiveness if it does not take consideration the actual people to whom it is addressed, if it does not use their language, their signs and symbols, if it does not answer the questions they ask, and if it does not have an impact on their concrete life¹⁶.

African culture is rich with a wealth of values especially in liturgical and administrative purposes, which it can conveniently offer to the Church for the growth of faith as possible ways of realizing the practice of inculturation. These priceless values and qualities “are providential preparations for the transmission of the Gospel”¹⁷ and they are enshrined in the African culture and lying latent due to the nature of the first evangelization that neglected their application. There is need for reconciliation between the inherited Christian religion and the African traditional religion. For the deepening of the Christian faith, there is need for a model of the Church that responds to the challenges of the African society today; a need for a Church that will not be divorced of good cultural values, a Church that will reconcile all the agents of evangelization and commit them to the African

14 J. Ukpong, *African Theologies Now: a profile*, Nigeria: Edoret Publication, 1984, p. 27.

15 Cf. J. Chupungco, *Op. cit.*, New York: Paulist Press, 1982, p. 48.

16 Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no 63.

17 AMECEA, *The African Synod Comes Home*, Nairobi: Paulines Publications, 1995, p. 27.

system of collaboration and care. With the spirit of inculturation, African Fathers began to think of the need for a familiar and inculturated Church “that bears witness to a different kind of the world”¹⁸ representing people of God. The Synod marked the climax of this reflection of the African theologians on inculturation.

The need for *inculturation* was regarded as the major underlying factor that necessitated the convocation of the African Synod, which took place in Rome from April 10th to May 8 1994. Discussing about inculturation, the African Bishops were only calling for “an original African theology”. They maintained that the “so-called theology of adaptation is completely out of model, and should be replaced or modified by the theology of incarnation, what we call today, inculturation”¹⁹. Prior to the Synod, Pope John-Paul II used to encourage Africans during his apostolic visits on the importance of inculturation. I have two examples here to give. In his visit to Kenya in 1980, he said: “The acculturation or ‘inculturation’, which you promote, will truly be a reflection on the incarnation of the Word”. By respecting, and fostering the “particular values and riches of your people’s heritage, you will be in a position to lead them to a better understanding of the mystery of Christ which is to be lived in the concrete and daily experience of African life... Thus not only is Christianity relevant to Africa but Christ in the members of his Body is Himself African”²⁰. Again in his address to the Nigerian Bishops during his visit to Nigeria in 1982, he said:

An important aspect of your own evangelization role is the whole dimension of the inculturation of the Gospel into the lives of your people... the Church truly respects the culture of each people. In offering the Gospel Message the Church does not intend to destroy what is good and beautiful. In fact, she recognizes many cultural values and through the power of the gospel purifies the values and takes into Christian worship certain elements of the people’s customs. The Church comes to bring Christ... Evangelization aims at penetrating and elevating culture by the power of the Gospels²¹.

18 E. E. Uzukwu, (ed.) Bulletin of Ecumenical Theology, Issue on Christian Mission in the Third Millennium, Globalisation and Reconciliation, 1997, vol. 9, pp.89-113.

19 M. P. Hebga, “*Universality in Theology and Inculturation*”, in Elochukwu E.E. Uzukwu, (ed.), Bulletin of Ecumenical Theology Published by The Ecumenical Association of Nigerian Theologians, Nigeria: Snaap Press, 1994, Vol. 6, 1, pp. 52-68.

20 John Paul II, “*The Real time and value of the African person and society*” – address to the Kenyan Bishops in Nairobi, Kenya, in AFER, 22, May 1980, pp. 211-217.

21 Pope John Paul II presentation of the need of inculturation in L’Osservatore Romano, Special Edition in English, March-April 1982, p. 22 quoted in C. N. Etokudoh, “*The Church’s Mission in Nigeria Beyond the*

The Holy Father acknowledges the fact that the process of inculturation is necessary for the planting and incarnating of the Gospel message within cultures, but he warns against the danger of “passing uncritically from a form of alienation to an over estimation of culture. Since culture is a human creation marked by sin, it too, needs to be healed, ennobled and perfected”²². In a simple language, Pope calls for a respect to cultures that receive the Gospel message, but not without purifying it from its diabolic nature, thereby, retaining its symbolic good values. While symbol unites and strengthens, diabolic disintegrates, separates and disorganises effective communication. Meaning that every heart, everything which helps the Gospel message to grow, to build a community, to heal, to give and to sustain life is symbolic while the contrary, the self-centred, the exclusivity and the intolerance are said to be diabolic which need to be purified. The underlying idea is the Africanization of the Gospel message to enable the people worship their God within their culture.

James Okoye, one of the Igbo theologians that participated in the Synod, writes thus: “In the Middle Ages, the Church through the work of the monasteries helped in fashioning the new European culture. A similar challenge exists now in Africa, The culture which gave its identity to our people, is in serious crisis”²³. “Africans want Christ who helps them discover their own African personality”²⁴. “Inculturation thus traces a triple fidelity in the changing circumstances: fidelity to the traditional values, fidelity to the marrow of Africa and fidelity to Christ and his message. The final goal of inculturation is holiness”²⁵, a holiness determined by the particular values of the culture”²⁶ which will be very relevant in Igboland of Nigeria.

year 2000” a paper presented at the bi-Annual meeting of the Association of Nigerian Priest in Belgium on the 24th April 1998, published in A. Njoku (ed.) *The Holy Spirit Lectures*, Leuven: Press, vol. 1, 1999, p.25.

22 *Vatican II*, *Lumen Gentium*, No 16; *Ad Gentes*, No. 9; and *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, No. 53.

23 J. Okoye, “*The Synod Challenges the Church in Africa*”, in O. Ike & E.Uzukwu (eds.) *The African Synod: Initial Results and Reflections*, in *Bulletin of Ecumenical Theology*, Vol. 6, No. 2, 1994, p. 33.

24 B. Haushiku, I.C.P., *Apostolic Vicar of Windhoeck*, in *South African Publication Bulletin*, no. 10, April 14, 1994, p. 7.

25 James Okoye, *Ibid.*, p. 33.

26 *Ibid.*, p. 33.

1.4 Inculturation in the Nigerian context

Inculturation as a process by which group of communities from the background of their cultural world-view, respond to the proclamation of the Gospel message, refers to an effort to deepen the faith and to make the Church in Igboland to be more relevant to the Christians. Pope John Paul II pointed out that “inculturation must be understood as the effort to communicate the message of Christ by incarnating it in the lives and cultures of each people, thereby enabling them ‘to bring forth from their own living tradition original expression of Christian life, celebrated and thought’”²⁷. This incarnational encouragement from the Holy Father became as it were, a fortifying base for the Nigerian Bishops to start thinking seriously on the issue of inculturation.

The Bishops of Nigeria took up the discussion of inculturation on its principles, but the practical application within its contextual situation is another challenge. They distinguished five phases: (1) reaffirmation in Nigeria; (2) study to discover the positive values of the culture; (3) study to discover the cultures’ disvalues; (4) explicit proclamation of the Gospel message and finally; (5) the Christian community becomes the evangelizer²⁸. They see the relationship of the Church and theology to culture as fundamental in the discussion of the incarnation of faith and the need for co-operation of all and sundry so that the face of the earth will be renewed. They accepted the notion that the incarnation is the proper model of inculturation, basing their argument on the fact that incarnation is a cosmic event that encourages the entire human history²⁹. In their joint pastoral letters on inculturation, they emphasized this assumption when they wrote:

There is no culture no matter how perverse, which does not possess some positive structures, symbols and value systems as imprints of God’s passage through her...The event of the incarnation does not belong entirely to the past. Rather, its historical essence is of a re-occurring nature, making it possible for the *Logos* to continually assume the

27 Cf. Pope John Paul II, “*Episcopal Ministry at the Service of Life*”, (May 1980) in Africa: Apostolic Pilgrimage, Boston: Daughters of St. Paul Publication, 1980, p. 243, See also Iniobong Udoidem, Pope John Paul II on Inculturation - Theory and Practice, Maryland: Lanham Press, 1996, p. 49.

28. Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Nigeria, The Nigerian Church: Evangelization through Inculturation, Pastoral letter, Nigeria: Catholic Secretariat Press, 1991, pp. 19- 20.

29 S. Iniobong Udoidem, *Op. cit.*, p. 50.

body of any subsequent human history and culture. This is why incarnation is used synonymously with inculturation³⁰.

Here the Nigerian Bishops accept the fact that every culture has its symbolic and diabolic values, and that through the process of inculturation, the good qualities or values are used for the propagation of the faith. They maintain also that the process of incarnation is dynamic and “finds its home in every culture and continues to offer its message of salvation³¹. This is beautiful, and efforts should be made to put all these into practice realizing the good qualities of inculturation for the incarnation of the Gospel message in Igboland.

1.5 Qualities of the agent of inculturation

The agent of inculturation ought to be down to earth in that he should “be aware of his or her own strengths and weaknesses, biases and prejudices”³². Shineller³³, in his *Handbook on Inculturation*, presented a very nice essay on the agents of inculturation from which we present the salient points on the necessary qualities as follows:

- He should not only be working as a team and collaboration with others, but “should complement his or her talents and resources with the talents of others.
- He ought to act as a facilitator, not to make decisions for others as much as to offer perspectives and resources so that those in the situation make their own informed decisions. As a facilitator, he comes with a conviction that God is already present in a situation; he should endeavour to let the power and love of God to deeply illuminate and guide that context or culture.
- He should be aware of his or her vision of the Church, Gospel, theology and tradition so that he or she can share this with others, letting it be modified and developed in that interchange. As some have the skill for listening, others for leadership, and the more

30 Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria, *Op. cit.*, p. 50.

31 I. Udiodem, *Op. cit.*, p. 49.

32 P. Schineller, *A handbook on Inculturation*, Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1990, p. 68.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

aware we are of our own abilities and lacks, the better we can carry out the process of inculturation.

- He should aim at maintaining the balance between immersion and empathy, on the one hand, and critical conviction and assertiveness, on the other.
- He ought to be a trusted authority and resource for those in the cultural situation.

He is a servant who puts the needs of the situation before his own agenda. Hence, he enters into a place with respect and humility, knowing that he or she treads on holy ground and at the invitation of those concerned. He ought to be patient, be ready to accept failure or rejection, humility to accept himself to be ministered to, should have the spirit of sharing and giving, needs a listening heart – ability to listen to the call of God as it comes through the tradition, and, equally important, an ability to listen to the call of God as it comes through the persons in the situation where one is ministering. This listening attitude stems from a humility that demands an asceticism, and presupposes a deep love and respect for those with whom one works and ministers. Finally, he maintains that the word “listening” for him ‘seems to be the successful practice of inculturation’³⁴.

The above summary of Schineller’s which contributions to the debate of the qualities of a good agent of inculturation, helps to show its contextuality as it is meant to be expressed by the local Church. It is not primarily a matter of theory or speculation or legislation, but a process of conviction borne out of ‘*faith-commitment*’ towards growth and maturity, “*self-governing*”, “*self-supporting*”, and “*self-propagating*” from which perspectives, one can assess the essence of inculturation.

1.6 Essence of inculturation

The essence of inculturation is mainly seen on its application from the viewpoint of what we have discussed of it. We have seen that inculturation is the process by which “Christian faith becomes incarnate in the local culture” that receives it through dialogue, considering the essential and relevant elements of the people’s philosophy, art and

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.61-73.

spirituality that give meaning to their lives. Bearing in mind our contextual area of Igboland, inculturation underlines its application in theological, liturgical, catechetical, pastoral, juridical, anthropological and communal dimensions as areas that must never be lost sight of³⁵. More concretely, it calls for urgent action in such area as collaboration through communalism. It will help to reflect the African world-view of family in relation to life and communication (culture) that goes with the propagation of faith. Suffice it to say that “inculturation includes the whole life of ecclesia, God’s family and the entire process of evangelization³⁶”.

Truly speaking, this spirit of inculturation involves a critical encounter between the Christian faith and the human, which includes not only the world-view, but also religious and social experiences, economic and political aspirations of the people. With the application of inculturation, the Gospel message becomes the principle that purifies guides, animates, elevates and, where necessary, challenges every culture, transforming it in such a way that there is a new creation, new ways of doing things, especially in aspects of *co-operation* for the progress of the Church between the clergy and the laity within the God’s family.

The spirit of intercultural relationship, by its nature, helps a lot for the enrichment of cultures where essential values are adopted and inculturized. It is important to note that inculturation *per se* is not against cultural dynamism or evolution, but, by its nature, it tries to synthesis values for unification and proper identity. It works against syncretism of worship and helps the faithful to unify and deepen their faith. While problems are multiple, ways of resolving them will also vary. Our concentration is on collaboration of the agents of evangelization who belong to some cultural set up. The solution to our problem is sought through the enlightenment of inculturation and dialogue that touch on people as well as on culture in view of the nature of ecclesiology. In this case, we need to give inculturation time within the process of human progress than to think that its operation ought to be automatic

35 Cf. African Synod, Message 18, in M. Brown, , The African Synod, Documents, Reflections, Perspectives, Maryknoll (NY): Orbis Books, 1996, pp. 1-87.

36 J. Okoye, *Op. cit.*, p.33.

or immediate. This means that it has to guide African theologians to respond to dreams, daily problems, fears of the unknown, hunger, insecurity, injustice, oppression, poor relationship, etc, which are daily human challenges, being addressed in their perspectives.

It means that inculturation cannot succeed without the active participation of the laity which “consists of about 99% of the Church”³⁷ in Igboland. It really needs the planning and support of the lay people who are members of the Church also. People have their different gifts and talents; clergy and laity should work hand in hand in the realization of inculturation that should not be a one sided activity. This calls for a cordial interpersonal relationship among all sectors of the faithful. Inculturation is a process by which Christianity is lived, expressed and communicated in a contextual culture as it enters into dialogue with it. What is important to emphasis is that inculturation should not be applied as primarily a matter of theory, and still less of legislation, but ought to be a process of growth towards maturity in faith³⁸. The underlying factor here is the insertion of the Gospel message into a culture it comes into contact with through intercultural dialogue, to generate new ways of applying inculturation.

2. Dialogue as the midwifery of collaboration

Today, an oriented type of evangelization is much more urgent and it has to be expressed in the spirit of inculturation through the processes of collaboration and dialogue. From our previous analysis, we discovered that there has been a lack of an effective spirit of collaboration and fruitful dialogue among the agents of evangelization in Igboland due to the problem of real gospel incarnation within the receiving culture and ecclesiology as observed. In our observation we noticed that many of the Christian communities: dioceses, parishes, religious congregations of men and women, natural families, etc., are still living in the Pre-Vatican II perception of ecclesia.

37 G. Ujoma, “*The Priest in Nigeria Today: A Laywoman's Perspective*”, in Luke Mbefo *et al.*, *The Clergy in Nigeria Today*, [SIST Symposium Series, No. 3], Nigeria-Enugu: Snaap Press Ltd., 1994, p. 64.

38 . A.A. Roest-Crollius, *Op. cit.*, p. 734.

In view of our analysis, we shall present the theory of dialogue as it relates to its twin sister, “inculturation”. These will constitute favourable complementary instruments through which collaboration among the people of Christ’s mystical body in Igboland will be realized. In other words, effective interplay of these inter-related concepts as they apply in the real situation will help to address the challenging problem more conveniently for effective mobilization of the agents of evangelization within Igbo culture, to ensure a healthy and free communication among people. Inculturation begins with a dialogue that disposes the mind of the participants to work collaboratively by critically marrying the Gospel message with the local culture that receives it. However, inculturation, as discussed, will not be realized if not through dialogue. By the nature of dialogue, it is an essential process, playing the role of a midwife, through which inculturation is achieved as it tries to harmonize the Gospel to the cultural life of the people. Having presented the theoretical function of inculturation previously, an effort will be made to expose its functional process through dialogue.

In this section, we shall concentrate on the reflection of dialogue which will be handled under the two following subheadings: (1) the concept of dialogue and (2) the teaching of the Church on dialogue. While the “concept” helps us to understand the meaning of dialogue from different viewpoints, its “teaching” will show how relevant it is in today’s mission through inculturation.

2.1. The concept of dialogue

The question of dialogue is a question of life, mutual understanding and collaborative services, which the world needs today, especially, in evangelization. The “rapid changes in the world and the deeper understanding of the mystery of the Church as the universal sacrament of salvation”³⁹ in all cultures, have given rise to the premium consideration of dialogue. Etymologically, the word “dialogue” is derived from two roots: “*dia*” meaning “through”, and “*logos*” meaning “the word”, or more particularly, “the meaning of the

39 John Paul II, *Encyclical Letter Divine Misericordia*, no 2.

word”. The image it gives is of a river of meaning flowing around and through the participants⁴⁰.

According to David Bohm (a social scientist and philosopher) and his co-editors, “dialogue, is a way of exploring the roots of the many crises that face humanity today. It enables inquiry into, and understanding of the sorts of processes that fragment and interfere with real communication among people, nations and even different parts of the same organization”⁴¹. What Bohm and his colleagues are projecting is that through the spirit of dialogue, the participants can explore or investigate into the individual or collective accumulated crises, presuppositions, ideas, beliefs, and feelings that subtly control human interactions and which gradually emerge as discussion proceeds. It provides an opportunity to participate in a process that displays communication successes, and challenges minds to speak freely. This can reveal the often puzzling patterns of incoherence that lead those involved to avoid certain issues or to experience a superiority syndrome. In other words, dialogue creates the opportunity for each participant to examine the preconceptions, prejudices and characteristic patterns that lie behind thoughts, opinions, beliefs, as well as to understand the roles one intends habitually to play⁴². It also offers an opportunity for people to share in the available insights, which not only enriches a discussion, but also unfolds formative divergent views that help to satisfy the minds of the participants in the discovery of more reality and creativity in resolving issues. This process of looking at dialogue from this perspective is pertinent as it reveals that in the process of dialogue, a problem of human crisis may be resolved.

Pope John Paul II defines dialogue as the world language of understanding and love, which leads not only to inquiry and experiential wisdom, but also to inner purification and real conversion, tolerance and respect, which, if pursued with docility to the Holy Spirit,

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, No. 2.

⁴¹ Cf. D. Bohm *et al.* (eds.), *Dialogue*, London: Lee Nichol Routledge Publication, 2004. This text was transcribed by Richard Burg. email: [REDACTED]

⁴² *Ibid.*

will be spiritually fruitful⁴³. Dialogue, as he explains, involves a completely concentrative attention being guided by the influence of the Holy Spirit, both internal and external in love and care (use of the heart in relation with the senses of the psyche). What it means is that to involve oneself in dialogue, one has to be wholly committed: physically, intellectually, morally, etc, in the process of discussion. It refers to all the interior faculties and activities of the human person: intuiting, conceptualizing, reasoning, willingness, imagining and motioning of all kinds and empathy. Actually, what it involves is that the concentration required here should capture the totality of the person to be wrapped up in the mutual dialogue so as to capture the essential meaning of what the other party or the other members are trying to put across.

Cardinal Arinze presents dialogue as “a meeting of people of differing religions, in an atmosphere of freedom and openness, in order to listen to the other, to try to understand that person’s religion, and hopefully to seek possibilities of collaboration”⁴⁴. This form of exchange could be regarded as *interreligious dialogue ad extra* or *intercultural dialogue ad extra*. While the interreligious dialogue refers to a dialogue outside oneself with somebody else who professes a different worldview and different religious ideas, the intercultural dialogue is applied to two or more persons with different cultural backgrounds, and perhaps, bearing different religions like Christianity and the African traditional religion. We have another form of exchange that could be called *interreligious dialogue ad intra*, that is, a dialogue of worldviews and religious ideas within an individual for a balanced view of other religious teachings and traditions⁴⁵. However, we have another form of dialogue which is the *intra ecclesial dialogue*. This is the dialogue within the Catholic Church that has to do with the traditional hierarchy, clergy and religious, and between these groups and the laity.

43 John Paul II, Encyclical letter on the permanent Validity of the Church’s Missionary Mandate, *Redemptoris Missio*, No. 56.

44 C. D. Isizoh, “Dialogue with African Traditional Religion in Sub-Saharan Africa: The Changing Attitude of the Catholic Church”, <http://www.afrikaworld.net/afrel/changing-attitude.htm>.

45 *Ibid.*, p. 7.

Ecclesia in Africa (EIA) provides encouragement for dialogue within the Church. It encourages each diocese to create the necessary structures for dialoguing and planning⁴⁶.

Dialogue, as we have seen in the definitions, is a way of active participation through application of all the senses for collective observation on how internalized and hidden values and intentions can control our behaviour in communal discussions, and on how unnoticed cultural and individual differences can clash without our realizing what is happening. Objectively speaking, it can be seen as an arena in which collective learning takes place and out of which a sense of increased harmonic collaboration through understanding and creativity can arise through sharing of fertilized and well thought out ideas that flow among the members. As the nature of dialogue is exploratory and unfolds gradually, its meaning and its methods continue to emerge even in the process of evangelization which involves two or more cultures in dialogue. No firm rules can be laid down for conducting a dialogue because its essence is exploratory and a learning process. It is not as the result of consuming a body of information or doctrine imparted by an authority, nor as a means of examining or criticizing a particular theory or programme, but rather as part of an unfolding process of creative participation among the members⁴⁷ of any class. Based in this perspective, dialogue is essential when we talk of effective collaboration in any given situation, and more particularly, among the agents of evangelization who have a common project in mind.

2.2 The teaching of the Church on dialogue

Dialogue awareness is highly considered in the world today following the international relationship and the rapid growth of interdependence in human life. As an important instrument for the propagation of faith within cultures that receive it, John Paul II, among other Popes (in continuation of the work of Pope Paul VI on dialogue), has always promoted the spirit of dialogue at all levels of human life in response to the challenges

46 Cf. Pope John Paul II, The Church in Africa, Post-Synodal Exhortation Ecclesia in Africa, Nairobi: Paulinus Publications Africa, 1995, p. 88.

47 *Ibid.*

facing mission today. Pope Paul VI's encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam*⁴⁸, a document described by Pope John Paul II as the "Magna Charter of dialogue" under its various forms was spelt out more clearly in the Second Vatican Council as one of his greatest achievements in the promotion of dialogue awareness.

Thus, the Constitution, *Gaudium et Spes* encouraged dialogue among all men. It springs from mutual respect and love which should be found in all spheres of human interaction. *Lumen Gentium* affirms that salvation is possible for other believers outside the visible Christian fold. In the declaration *Nostra Aetate*, the magna charter for relations with other believers maintains that all men form but one community of God. All these Constitutions sanctioned the dialogue method in all aspect of theological discussions and practices⁴⁹. Popes Paul VI and John Paul II have both assumed the role of animators and guides in the progress of religious dialogue by prophetic gestures and their pastoral visits along with encyclical letters in view of promoting dialogue awareness. For instance, the Secretariat for non-Christians was founded by Paul VI on the Pentecost feast of 1974, which was renamed Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue in 1998. Today, it is the Church's central body for the animation and coordination of initiatives in dialogue. Also, his two documents published on Pentecost 1984 and 1991 have both played an important role in clarifying the concept of dialogue in mission areas and in defining the relationship between dialogue and proclamation of the Gospel⁵⁰.

48 Cf. Paul VI, Encyclical letter *Ecclesiam Suam*, AAS 58, 1964, pp. 34-38.

Various Conciliar and Post-Conciliar Documents are available as precious records of what the Spirit is saying to the Church; see also John Paul II "Address at the conclusion of the Plenary Assembly of the Secretariat for non-Christians", March 3, 1984, in *Lineamenta, The Church in Africa and her Evangelizing Mission towards the Year 2000*, Vatican City, 1990.

49 These documents are established by the Church to demonstrate the fact that dialogue awareness is seen as an important aspect of Her mission of evangelization (in dealing with cultures, non-Christians and different Inter-religious dialogue); it is a necessary means for the accomplishment of the Church's universal salvific purpose. Especially Vatican II Ecumenical Council Decree on Ecumenism, *Unitatis Redintegratio*, and the Declaration on the Relationship of the Church with non-Christian Religions, *Nostra Aetate*. On the practical level, structures have been established to ensure the implementation of the Conciliar directives. The most important among these are The Pontifical Council for dialogue with unity, The Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue and The Pontifical Council for Dialogue with Non-Believers. These were formally, The Secretariat for Ecumenism, The Secretariat for Dialogue with other Religious and The Secretariat for Dialogue with Non-Believers, etc.

50 Cf. M. Zago, "Interreligious Dialogue", in S. Karotemprel, (Chief ed.), *Following Christ in Mission - Foundational Course in Missiology*, Nairobi: Paulines Publications, 1995, pp. 101-109.

Pope John Paul II's contribution on dialogue at all levels has been very encouraging, especially in Africa. For instance, his address at the conclusion of the Plenary Assembly of the Secretariat concerning "*The Attitude of the Church Towards the Followers of Other Religions: Reflections and Orientations on Dialogue and Mission*"⁵¹, is worthy of note. Francis Cardinal Arinze recently, formally edited a collection of 302 Vatican documents that have to do with Religious Dialogue in the *Papal Magisterium*⁵², The Church's openness over the past thirty years is symbolized by two events in Assisi, September and October 1986 meetings sponsored by the World Wild life Fund for religions to reflect on ecology and on the World Day of Prayer for Peace, which was convoked by Pope John Paul II. Harmony among human beings and respect for other creatures constitute the necessities of dialogue.

Dialogue is an important reality in the human relationships being promoted by the Church especially after the Second Vatican Council for a better root-taking of the Gospel message in all cultures that receive it. Recapitulating as it were, all the above definitions, our working definition of dialogue in light of Professor Justin Ukpong's⁵³ viewpoint, will be taken as an approach in relating with other people and their culture by assuming their freedom and legitimacy of expression as it promotes understanding and equal respect due to them, including their cultural life-style and their faith situation to promote achievement of a deeper knowledge. This presupposes that the purpose of dialogue is not only to listen and to communicate, but also to enrich and to be enriched by the knowledge of the other and not just as a one-way passage. Vatican II, when concentrating on various ways of creating the awareness of the fact that dialogue as part of the mission of the Church (as it clarified the

51 Pope John Paul II, *The Attitude of the Church Towards the Followers of Other Religions: Reflections and Orientations on Dialogue and Mission*, Vatican City Publication: Secretariat Pro Non Christianis, 1984.

52 F. Arinze (Cardinal) (ed.), "*Interreligious dialogue*", a compilation of documents in the *Papal Magisterium*, Vatican City Publication: Secretariat Pro Non Christianis. He was formally was the President of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, and later appointed the Prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments. By 25 April, 2005, he was appointed Cardinal-Bishop of Velletri-Segni.

53 Cf. J. S. Ukpong, "*Towards a Renewed Approach to Inculturation Theology*", in *Journal of Inculturation Theology*, 1994, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 55-56. See also The Address of Pope John Paul II at the Conclusion of the Plenary Assembly of the Secretariat *Pro Non Christianis* in *The Attitude of the Church Towards the Followers of Other Religions: Reflections and Orientations on Dialogue and Mission*, Vatican City: Secretariat Pro Non Christianis, 1984.

important aspects of missionary activity), paved the way for evangelization or perhaps pre-evangelization⁵⁴. This Council also gave it full attention and deliberations to compiling the documents of dialogue and mission, inter-religious dialogue and dialogue for life for deepening of people's spirituality, etc.

In view of our definitions, dialogue could be considered in three perspectives: First, as it facilitates human discussion at horizontal levels. This calls for a reciprocal human communication leading to a common good, as a fruitful guide, on a vertical relationship of command and obedience, which has characterized the Catholic Church in Igboland. This requires a mutual and deep interpersonal relationship with a spirit of collaboration of persons or community who have a common goal and whose conscious unity is an end in itself⁵⁵. Secondly, in the context of proliferation of religions for the maintenance of the spirit of ecumenism, dialogue stands for "all the positive and constructive inter-religious relations with individuals and communities of other faiths. These are directed in mutual understanding and enrichment in obedience to truth and respect for freedom"⁵⁶. It includes both witness and exploration of respective religious convictions bearing in mind what unites people more than what separates them. However, it is important to note that religious dialogue is different from ecumenism which is more of a "movement for the restoration of unity among all Christians... and those who take part in it invoke the Trinity and profess belief in Jesus as Lord and Saviour"⁵⁷. Thirdly, dialogue can be taken as an attitude of respect and of cordial relationship "which permeates or should permeate all those activities that constitute the evangelising mission of the Church. This can appropriately be called 'the spirit of dialogue'"⁵⁸; where clergy and laity work in collaboration and in mutual understanding, giving evidence to the importance of this theory in our context. "Dialogue is possible only when the other is regarded as a partner and not as an addressee"⁵⁹. Of course,

54 Cf. Vatican II, *Ad Gentes*, No. 10-12.

55 Cf. E. Onuoha, "Inculturation of Church Authority in Igboland", in A.N.O. Ekwunife, et al., (eds.), *Renewal of Priestly Life and Ministry: The Nigerian Experience*, Nigeria-Enugu: Snaap Press Ltd., 1995, pp. 302-331.

56 This verse is quoted in Prof. M. Zago's paper, *Op. cit.*, pp. 101-102.

57 Vatican Council II, Decree on Ecumenism, *Unitatis Redintegratio*, see also M. Zago, *Ibid.*, p. 101, who insists that the two terms "*dialogue and Ecumenism*" are quite different in their meanings.

58 M. Zago, *Op. cit.* p. 101.

59 J. S. Ukpong, *Op. cit.*, p. 32.

dialogue may have its own special conditions depending on the perceptive views of the various participants involved.

Obviously, dialogue presupposes going beyond soliloquies and superiority of positions, powers and academics, to discovering others and treating them as a fellow human beings, which is fundamental. Openness towards the communal objective is a necessary factor effective dialogue. Dialogue works hand in hand with collaboration in any institutional set up.

3. The theory of collaboration

Having treated the theories of inculturation and dialogue, we shall devote this section to the theory of collaboration. In the world we live today, “collaboration ministry and ministry in collaboration are accepted as an effective way of coordinating the agents of evangelization in the Church”⁶⁰. “In the world characterized by the most varied interdependence, we are constantly aware of the need to live out the mission we received from the Lord in collaboration with others who have received a similar call through baptism, as well as with those whom the Spirit impels and guides in the service of humanity”⁶¹. Collaboration, like dialogue, has occasioned a real concern to the Church in view of a new model of evangelization. The source of the call addressed to all members of the Mystical Body to participate actively in the mission and edification of the people of God, is to be found in the mystery of the Church. The people of God participate in this call through the dynamic nature of an organic communion in accord with their diverse ministries and charisms.

The call has been intensified in the documents of the *Magisterium*, particularly those of the Second Vatican Council and thereafter. Even the last three General Ordinary Assemblies of the Synod of Bishops reaffirmed the particular identities of the lay faithful and of sacred ministers and religious, in their proper dignity and diversity of functions.

60 A. Farias, «*Collaborative Ministry*», *Spiritan Bulletin Journal*, Nigeria: Spiritan Publication, 2000, p. 8.

61 *Ibid.*, p. 8.

These Assemblies encouraged all the faithful to build up the Church by collaborating, in communion and in true dialogue, for the salvation of the world. This was likewise verified in the preparation for the 1994 Synod of Bishops on Religious Life where it is stated: “Through all, there should be a sincere desire to instil an authentic rapport of communion and of collaboration between the Bishops, Institutes of Consecrated Life, the secular clergy and the laity”. In the subsequent Post-Synodal Exhortation, the Supreme Pontiff confirmed the specific contribution of religious life in the mission and in the building up of the Church⁶².

In handling the theory of collaboration, we are considering it mainly from three viewpoints: (1) attempting definition, which will help to explain what collaboration stands for, from the perspective of the experts, (2) the mechanism of collaboration that will reveal the possibility of conflicts in organizational set up and ways of resolving them, and (3) the involvement for collaboration within systems. This will show the importance of collaboration and how it functions among groups of people. Finally, the conclusion of the three theories will follow.

3.1 Attempting definition of collaboration

I found that the entrepreneurial spirit producing innovation is associated with a particular way of approaching problems that I call “integrative”: the willingness to move beyond received wisdom, to combine ideas from interconnected sources, to embracing change as an opportunity to test limits. To see problems integratively is to see them as wholes, related to large wholes and thus, challenging established practices – rather than walling off a piece of experience and preventing it from being touched or affected by any new experience⁶³.

From this citation, we experience synoptically what collaboration is all about, using such a phrase: “two heads are better than one”. There is joy in looking at a problem integratively as it helps to explore all aspects of it and for a better result. Naturally, it is not

62 Cf. N. Utiverden *et al.* (eds.), “*Collaboration of the Non-Ordained*”, through web-site: <http://www.katolsk.no/artikler/non-ord/noteshtm#no.4>.

63 R. M. Kanter, *The Class of 1960 Professor of Business Administration*, Cambridge: Harvard Business Press, 1999, p. 27.

easy to present an accurate definition of a term; at times, people end up limiting the meaning of the object of definition to situational demands. However, definition helps to give a working meaning to a term and it is in this perspective that we shall try to consider different definitions on collaboration from which we shall have our synthesized and concise working definition.

In effect, collaboration of all the faithful exists in both orders of the Church's mission; whether it is in the spiritual order, bringing the message of Christ and his grace to men, or, in the temporal one, permeating and perfecting secular reality with the evangelical spirit. As a concept, collaboration presents a theoretical framework through which the participating members focus on a common goal, realizable through division of activity as our quotation above can show. This could be considered according to the specialization of the participants who are out to achieve a common purpose. When the thoughtful idea is realized through collective effort, we then talk of practical implementation of collaboration. As it were, collaboration is vastly used in our world today. There are several different types of collaboration identified with people of all works of life, but most theories describe it as a group of individuals bringing expertise from diverse disciplines to achieve a common goal⁶⁴. According to W. Wulf, it is not important with new technologies, whether the collaboration takes place in one site or is conducted through the medium of distance technology⁶⁵. What is essential here is the recognition of special skills, expertise of the members, and functions shared accordingly. Nevertheless, for an effective collaboration, distance technology may be regarded as the last resort. Thus, being present during communal meetings that may involve more than three people is absolutely necessary, but for Wulf, it is secondary. A source sees collaboration “as an effort made by two or more agencies to achieve results,”⁶⁶ who, if left to rely on their own individual efforts, will not succeed.

64 Cf. N. Utiverden *et al.* (eds.), *Op cit.*, no. 4.

65 Cf. W.A. Wulf, *Journal of Complexity*, Charlottesville: University of Virginia Publication, June 1994, and Email: [REDACTED]

66 Cf. UCLA, “*Collaboration: The Essential Elements of School Readiness Efforts*”, (Version 1 A, from web: <http://www.Mcprop10.org>, June 2002.

A group of social researchers in education sees collaboration as “an organization sharing its skills and knowledge with other organizations that agree to come together to form an interwoven path that will service the communities’ needs as well as being a mediator for resolving community issues”⁶⁷. The pertinent words here are “skill”, “servicing community needs” and “solving community problems as well”. Since *nemo dat quod non habet* (nobody gives what he does not have), experience is primary in collaboration for effective results. Moreover, collaboration that operates with skills, involves having physical, mental, and social dimensions put into play. Hence, the ability of seeing to the needs of the people and being able to resolve problems that arise as more heads are better than one, make the spirit of collaborative imperative.

Blending the above, we apply the English Learner’s Dictionary, which defines collaboration, as “an act of working together to produce a piece of work. If one does a work in collaboration with someone else, you share the work between you”⁶⁸. This text also explains collaboration as an act of working jointly either in cooperation or independently, but with a common purpose and common vision as all our employed definitions above can show. Taking together all the literature theories above, we then see collaboration as a process of coming together of the agents of evangelization (clergy-laity) with their diverse skills or people of common goals and backgrounds, contributing their skills and resources in an atmosphere of teamwork, trust, respect and flexibility, and utilizing an effective communication system to achieve desired goals and objectives. By collaboration we mean the ability of the clergy to work cooperatively with the laity, participating in a common objective.

Sometimes, collaboration and co-operation are understood to mean participation. But, in reality, they are not the same thing, though not unrelated to it. Collaboration and co-operation may require participation by various constituencies or groups of organizations at various levels. However, mere participation does not necessarily mean or show that there is

67 Cf. “*Researchers in education*”, on the web site: <http://www.wasu.edu>, (only detail).

68 C. Cobuild, *English Learner’s Dictionary*, International Edition, London: Harper Collins Publishers, 1994, p. 171.

effective collaboration and co-operation. It could be merely fellowshiping like ordinary members of a club organization. Such groups could be nominal members, if they are not directly involved in active duties. Take for instance, in a parish, where certain ceremonies are taking place. Parishioners are expected to participate (be present), but their collaboration (working together) may not be sought, (especially when such functions require specialization), unless a demand is made specifically for this. They are simply expected to be present and to enjoy the ceremony, perhaps to help to increase the number of the attendance. In areas of decision-making, in the real planning, implementation and dialogue out-put of the celebration and ministries, these nominal members may not be included. But active participation, especially on issues that involve decision making, does imply collaboration.

Collaboration as a process here involves two or more parties working together; it involves physical activities, cognitive imputes and attitudinal compatibility and display of professionalism, all being involved and each person is respected for what he is. James Dabhi argues that before such a collaboration, there is need for some orientation of formation for effective results: "laity-clergy collaborative formation involves both parties to learn how and when to collaborate and what kind of attitudinal changes would be required to do so on both sides"⁶⁹. Just as we have in every organization, there is bound to be conflict among the agents of evangelization which would also require processes of its settlement. Although, this aspect should not be handled at the interpretation level, but as vital as it is in any communal set up, we have chosen to consider briefly the theory views of Pierre Dillenbourg in his text *The Mechanism of Collaboration*⁷⁰ and that of Anthony D'Souza, a psychologist, in his text, *Leadership*⁷¹, which is based on how to resolve a conflict among groups of workers or associates.

69 J. C. Dabhi, "Laity-Clergy Collaboration" in *The Examiner*, Vol. 132, No 1, January 6, 2001, pp. 12-13.

70 P. Dillenbourg, *The mechanism of Collaborative Learning and the Internet University of Geneva's School of Psychology and Education*, ICCIA Press, 1995, page n.a.

⁷¹ A. D'Souza, *Leadership*, India-Bandra: Better Yourself Books Publication, 2001.

3.2. Mechanism process

When two or more persons working together in good faith, haven't acquired a qualitative education relevant to what they are committed to do, they discover that human knowledge and love depend much more on collaboration than just personal knowledge and personal exhibition of prowess. The fact that people come together for a common purpose to work collaboratively is what makes for effective communal lives to be worth living, and under such situations, much will be achieved in a situation like pastoral activities that demand teamwork. Through this process much is learnt by all the participants through cross knowledge transmission where ideas flow like water as they project the wealth of accumulated experiences. Since much is realized through collaborative teamwork, psychologists and pastoralists in their theories have suggested some mechanisms that will help different pastoral community bodies who work together in dioceses and parishes to be more effective and at the same time, more successful in project orientation and knowledge acquisition. In view of the limitation of our work, we will discuss briefly on the issue of conflict and how it is resolved.

3.2.1. Conflict and collaboration

Following the problem of our pastoral workers when they live and work together as a group, the discussion of conflict and how it is handled will be relevant to our situation. For P. Dillenbourg, conflict or disagreement implies that "others will challenge concepts and conclusions an individual may take for granted"⁷² in every collaborative venture. The socio-constructivist theory⁷³ maintains that conflict is part of communal participation as there are bound to be divergent opinions among the members. This emanates from the psychologist Piaget's "concept of conflict" which exists between what a participant believes and his existential actions in common. Their conception here is that the importance of the common objective should be so primary in the minds of the actors, that they consciously or unconsciously "ignore conflict" when it arises as an object of rift, but then, they will be forced by their communal tie to find out a solution to it quietly and

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 376.

⁷³ Cf. W. Doise, & G. Mugny, The social development of the intellect, Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1984.

collectively without causing problems among the members. “This theory is grounded in empirical work and sounds intuitively appealing”⁷⁴ where there is understanding among the workers.

In other words, what we should understand here is that conflict is part of nature, even in individuals. Inter-personal conflicts do arise and normally, one struggles to resolve one's conflict in the best way possible. As human beings differ, there is the tendency that they do disagree at some points as they work together for a common goal. But, why is it that the word “*ignore*” is being used by these theorists? Perhaps, what they are trying to explain is that the best way to resolve conflict is not to explode it, so that it will cause confusion or destruction, but on the contrary, to try to focus on the main objective, which eventually will be a guide to help the members to resolve whatever nature of conflict that arose in a mature manner. Social factors swing into gear and prevent people from ignoring conflicts when they arise. This is as true for slight differences in viewpoint as it is for clearly opposing views. The view here is that in a communal collaboration, should conflicts arise, reactions should not be anger, anxiety, facial manifestation of despair and disappointment on others, or trying to do away with it altogether or denying its existence. Rather, there is the need to find a way of resolving conflict in a manner it will not stain the existing mutual good relationship among the members by provoking greater tension.

Thinking about what can constitute conflict, this theory holds that it depends on the nature of collaboration existing among the people. For “some diverging viewpoints” may exist in such community which the members may not describe as conflict, as they strive for knowledge growth through a synthesis of views, while, in another group of community, “a simple disagreement, a slight misunderstanding can be as efficient as a clear conflict”⁷⁵ among them.

74 .A. D'Souza, *Op. cit.*, p. 376.

75 P. Dillenbourg, *Op. cit.*

Anthony D'Souza in his textbook on *Leadership* holds that "no groups, organizations, or even relationships exist long before the people experience differences, disagreements, and even arguments that lead to conflicts"⁷⁶. Should the leaders feel that such disagreements are wrong and unhealthy, "they will likely respond by evading or refusing to acknowledge that such problems exist. Thus, they tend to withdraw (leave the scene) or suppress any discussion of differences" of that nature. For D'Souza, these are negative ways of looking at reality and as such, "none of these responses will contribute to the development of a healthy relationship" or collaboration in any organization or pastoral activity. On the other hand, he continued, "effective leaders view conflicts as normal, natural and inevitable. Such an attitude towards conflict enables them (community members) to openly confront unpleasant situations to resolve them. Confrontation can result in the leaders' growth as well as the employees"⁷⁷. In his advice to leaders, he said that they are expected to learn the "skill involved in managing and resolving conflict constructively". This is because, "unresolved and inappropriate conflict has caused individuals to flounder and organizations to fail"⁷⁸. Conflict can eat away at human resources just as much as natural, physical and technical resources"⁷⁹. From this we can learn that, when conflicts are not verbalized, they do not predict positive outcomes, in certain situations⁸⁰. In any collaborative venture, efforts should be made for a mutual relationship through the spirit of teamwork. When suggested opinions are not functional, there is always the need to provide alternative plans for a success by trying to resolve conflicts that arise amicably through the love of Christ and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

3.2.2. Processes of resolving conflict

In his view on "Reactions to Conflicts" in relation to leadership role, D'Souza presents two skills for resolving conflicts on pastoral duties. They are: *assertiveness and*

76 A. D'Souza, Leadership and effective management, Nagasandra: St. Paul Press, 2001, p. 376.

77 *Ibid.*, p. 376.

78 *Ibid.*, p. 376.

79. *Ibid.*, p. 377.

80 Cf. G. Butterworth, "A brief account of the conflict between the individual & the social in models of cognitive growth", in G. Butterworth & P. Light (eds.) Social Cognition, Brighton-Sussex: Harvester Press, 1982, pp. 3-16.

responsiveness. According to him, assertiveness is necessary for a leader in pastoral activity to protect the pastoral view, needs and goals when the important general goal is at stake. In an effort to explain this concept, he states: “Assertiveness involves standing up for personal rights. Assertive leaders have the skill to express their thoughts, feelings, and beliefs in open, direct, honest, and appropriate ways that do not violate or infringe upon another’s rights. Assertive behaviour says – this is what I think; this is what I feel; this is how I see the situation”⁸¹.

Dealing on “responsiveness” as the second skill for handling conflict, D’Souza states: “How leaders (or groups) value the views, needs, and goals of other party and the keeping of the good relationship with them, determines the level of response”⁸². He then holds that “responsive leadership involves active and empathic listening” and encouragement. This means that in a situation of conflict, a leader is bound to listen to others’ viewpoints for a fruitful handling of the issue at stake. Finally, D’Souza gives steps that should be taken to resolve issues, which require that the parties concerned have to be clear as to what the problems are, thereby concentrating on “what each needs from the situation”. What is required in these steps are the ability to define the conflicting issue, brainstorming the possible options, selecting the most appropriate and applying it in the context.

D’Souza sees problem solving as an aspect of encouragement that helps for a progress in every local ecclesia or any organization as it aims at developing a process to respond to conflicts that arise in collaboration. He acknowledges the fact that “conflict generally tends to be destructive in nature and ends in a loss for the parties involved. Problem solving, however, results in the satisfactory fulfilment of their needs”. In terms of competency he continued, “problem solving and decision making, both are important for leadership activities, as they represent vital contributions toward the achievement of organizational goals and objectives”. He also insists that all leaders and their “groups are involved in the process of solving problems” Such problems according to him are mainly those that involve policy making, organizational skills, technical aspects and the inter-

81 A. D’Souza, Leadership and effective management, Nagasandra: St. Paul Press, 2001, *Op. cit.*, p. 377.

82. *Ibid.*, p. 377.

personal”⁸³ problem in any situation involves uncertainty, doubt and clamours for discussion of some sort of solution. The solution will be easier if everybody is positively concerned to search for it together. Its solving device is applied where a careful attention to the right analytical methodology is employed. The purpose is to maintain the mutual interpersonal and social grounding atmospheric relationships to prevent organizations from liquidation.

3.3. Involvement for collaboration

Our discussion above has given us an insight of what collaboration is all about. We observed that collaboration is a process by which a group of individuals unite to achieve a common goal. It involves:

(1) A group of committed members of evangelization coming together for a more progressive deliberation on issues of common interest, pastoral activities; sharing of their expertise knowledge through division of activities and respect for individuals;

(2) A common objective and orientation which requires collective efforts from persons or representatives of parish religious communities who have a fraternal deliberation on these pastoral activities of “common interest” for a fruitful result;

(3) An enrichment of spiritual well-being, not only in the participants themselves as they share the outcome of their brain-storming together, but also within the communities or groups they are representing. Having been animated by the Holy Spirit, God is glorified.

This presentation has not only revealed the meaning of collaboration, but also, the risk and the conflict involved and the approachable perspectives. Here too, we observed that conflicts are part of nature and as such, should not prevent people from participating effectively in collaboration. Even within an individual, Pierre Dillenbourg observed that

83 Ibid., pp. 407-408.

conflict does arise hence, effort has to be made for people to function in collaboration with others in true spirit to minimize its negative impacts.

By its nature, collaboration is more than just a division of labour that requires specialization; rather it evolves a unique collective ability to monitor different levels of conceptual development simultaneously. Like in a diocese, the activities of bishop, diocesan Council, parish priest and parish Councils, etc., are all operating at different levels but with the same motive: to build up the mystical body of Christ in collaborative ministry, through the shepherding of the local Bishops. “It is very difficult for a single individual to operate at multiple meta-levels simultaneously”⁸⁴ - so this division of labour is natural in that it is efficient for the group to work this way for the accomplishment of the general objective that enhances production and efficiency of those involved.

While collaboration involves time, effort and risks, the benefits can be enormous. It is interesting to note that there are many advantages in collaborative activities such as: skill training, specialization, social sharing of knowledge, human interaction, building up communal spirit of teamwork and self-improvement. Thus, considering the potential conditions for this process, it becomes necessary that a pastoral leader has an essential role to play in order to maximize the possibility of having an effective collaborative spirit among the members. By starting off well, “we can hope to make the journey with a minimum of detours”⁸⁵. In order to provide a durable peace and sustainable development among the collaborators, we have developed here a working system that will help to resolve conflicts when they arise. In view of the applied literature theories, collaboration is geared toward resolving problems of conflicts that may arise from the stress of carrying the burdens of others, from internalized ideas that remain pregnant in meaning, from loneliness, from misunderstanding of power and authority, from lack of coherency and consistency in policy and administration and from the loss of essential vision of the reality. It entails having a unity of purpose, unity of heart and soul in love, a growth in the

84 P. Dillenbourg, *Op. cit.*

85 Cf. S. Garcia, (ed.), *Collaboration: How to get Started*, Published by NACFLM, University of Dayton, Spring 2001, Volume 17, Issue 5, Web: www.nacflm.org. Email: [REDACTED]

knowledge of group dynamism, and the achievement of a common objective being divorced of selfish motive. What is fundamental is expressive openness to the community members and the ability of self-commitment to duty as members learn to think and to work interactively.

It is important to note that both Dillenbourg and D'Souza observed that effectiveness in collaboration is the core of all leadership activity. The argument here is that a lot will be achieved collaboratively when the leaders of the collaborative groups are dynamic and success-oriented. Also, our religious leaders will "best achieve their goals if they have the cooperation of those they work with"; and this will be determined by their "ability to communicate effectively" and to recognize and to encourage the potentialities of their members. This will help to influence the attitudes and actions of the pastoral leaders, their colleagues and their subordinates⁸⁶. What is required here is the ability of our religious leaders to be open-minded and to know how to sell their ideas in good spirit of love and respect. This involves sincere application of dialogue that warrants exchange of ideas. For D'Souza, skill in communicating or dialoguing, does not come without planning and without adequate effort, and like any other skill, it develops through practice, prayer and hard work.

In view of the above presentation, the general notion is that "good collaboration is not compromise and consensus; it is an amplified committed activity" and an additional challenge to all the mission workers who pilot pastoral affairs within the dioceses. Good collaboration, however, produces a good result that looks comfortable and familiar to all participants. It is not one person's design or strategy or discovery with a few other ideas thrown in, rather, it is a united effort that involves spirit-commitment. The collaboration process helps everyone to understand the total concept to the depth of any activity - even if some of the ideas don't sell through or are not immediately recognized exactly the way one would have wanted them; but at least, one understands why such issues are resolved the

⁸⁶ D'Souza, Leadership and Effective Management, *Op.cit.*, p. 140.

way they are⁸⁷. Collaboration does not remove the need for individual judgment or contribution; rather it enhances and perfects it through communal effort. What each person does is private and individual and it gets recognition within the communal effort. Poor collaborative effort affects a communal output, but that which occurs outside of any individual, and manifests itself in the way the *group* collective behaviour, deals with qualitative results. This collaborative effort emerges from the interactions of all of the different pastoral individual participants as they work in a local ecclesial set up like our parishes in Igboland. However, it is important to remember that unity and strength depend more on the pastoral leadership role and the ability to co-ordinate matters well.

Moreover, through collaboration, we realize within us our capabilities and limitations, what we can do and what we cannot do. This makes it possible to employ and work with other professionals whose expertise is needed in the same venture for the achievement of a set goal in our parishes. Hence, the recognition of our limitations as pastors and the acceptance of the laity's varieties in skills, pave way for effective collaboration which this project is out to show in view of our present local Churches in Igboland. Collaboration in relation to cooperation through mutual understanding could be projected as a continuation/complement of dialogue, especially, in relationship to the agents of evangelization, clergy and laity serving in our ecclesiastical provinces.

Applying this principle to all of us as the agents of evangelization, these collaborative qualities are essential for true and effective results if everybody is committed to the common purpose – the propagation of faith within the local culture that receives it. This means that the process of incarnation, inculturation is to be effectively implemented as the actors will be the main agents of mission activities. They are the personnel that will be involved in the realization of collaboration through the medium of dialogue and mutual understanding. We cannot collaborate effectively enough without dialogue; neither shall there be effective dialogue without collaboration of the members. As it were, these terms knit together and give meaning to each other. Through the spirit of collaboration, persons,

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 140.

groups or pastoral organizations have to come together for a common purpose – to carry out God’s message of salvation within our milieu. This process, no doubt, will help in the problem of collaboration in the new ecclesiology for good. In the process, dialogue takes over and gives more meaning to the dynamism among the members, who respond to the call of God through their cultural life-styles.

4. Conclusion on the theories

In our discussion about the theories, (inculturation, dialogue and collaboration) we have tried to show that collaboration is the right complement of dialogue and inculturation. The process of inculturation aims at bringing together the professed faith and inherited culture into an integrated synthesis, hence the need for dialogue and collaboration. The need to maintain justice and peace at all levels necessitates the essence of reconciliation among men at all times and spurs the spirit of collaboration, ecumenism and intercultural dialogue and faith-commitment. As shown in our earlier reflections, dialogue and collaboration share a lot in common: like spirit of co-operation and active participation, shared vision, mission goals, element of trust, respect for the contributions of the other team members, and a non-hierarchical value structure or shared leadership. A corollary element is diversity of charisma and effective communication that allows the diverse expertise to be shared. Both also agree that it is important to tap into the knowledge and perspectives of diverse groups in view of charisms and for the purpose of the common goal and individual knowledge enrichment. Hence, the complementarity of these theories in our work help to interpret the challenging issues of evangelization through dialogue and collaboration within a culture that has to enter into mutual relationship with the gospel message through inculturation.

In view of the above, could one then ask: “what are the relationships between dialogue and inculturation?” To ask this question is tantamount to asking the relationships between religions and cultures and the integral human development through reconciliation, collaboration and alliance for peaceful cohabitation among the people of God. The two issues, inculturation and intercultural dialogue, are intimately connected, since most of the

cultural situations are shaped by the perspectives of religion which is especially true in the case of cultures built on natural religions. Hence, in the evangelization task of the Church in which the Gospel of Jesus Christ meets with various cultures, an encounter with the traditional cultures or religions is inevitable. This task is best taken up by a religious dialogue with the culture of the people that has its own implications for the evangelizing mission of the Church, which was discussed when we treated the theory of dialogue.

On the other hand, in a response to such a question, we may deduce through analogy that the aim of using such concepts as “listening” “symmetrical,” “non-hostility and collaboration”, etc., in our earlier theories, is to show the free play of justice and peace, free human communication and co-operation among the agents of evangelization, thereby, justifying the plurality of nature and use the of gifts, while working in the vine yard of the Lord. Truly speaking, the underlying practical factor here is collaboration, which as it were, is the process through which dialogue and inculturation are expressed within the spirit of co-operation in a proposed model of ecclesiology. This co-operation will not be possible except there is a fertilized cultural atmosphere for the faith to take root through the process of inculturation. Suffice it to say that inculturation aims at marrying Christian faith and culture together and keeps them in conjugal fidelity to each other in a vibrant ecclesial community.

One could compare the process of inculturation to a marriage between two people of different personalities and cultures. They meet, exchange mutual agreement while living together as husband and wife. By living together in conjugal fidelity, there is a *mutual love of give and take* as they influence each other and purify themselves thereby maintaining a unifying structure of living whereby each one grows to maturity. In the same way, when the Gospel message meets with the culture of the people, there is adjustment of structures and selection of values that finally leads to mutual correlation. Inculturation takes place when the *Good News* comes to people living in their own culture and having a well defined nature of family ecclesia. The Gospel changes, purifies and enriches their culture as well as itself imbibes the values of these cultures. The people will begin to express their faith in a

new and original way⁸⁸, working in a mutual collaboration by being faithful to their religious commitment. What this means is that inculturation, having taken flesh in a culture, aims at transforming and integrating its good values into Christianity. At the same time, Christian values are inserted into human cultures. The fruit of a fertilized inculturation is the ability of the evangelizers and the evangelized to live and work collaboratively in the spirit of deep understanding of their faith in action. Inculturation, as it were, prepares ground for a healthy dialogue and a healthy collaboration. These are felt not only between culture and the new faith but also within the evangelizers themselves as they demonstrate the practical application of their faith belief-system in true collaboration.

All the applied theories are relevant within our context as they complement one another and help to address the issue at stake. Inculturation and dialogue, by their nature, have been working harmoniously in shaping the vision of human life. While inculturation constitutes the base, the fountain, the fertilized ground for human relationship at all levels, dialogue continues its work of human freedom of expression through the spirit of collaboration that knit all the participants working together in harmony. Although inculturation, on the other hand, concentrates with the insertion of the Church, harmony of cultures, and not that of the individual human beings, like enculturation, nevertheless, individuals gain their fundamental formation through its fertilized ground. Hence, we see a relationship between collaboration and inculturation and how both of them gear toward integral development of human interrelationship, the objective of which does not elude the spirit of dialogue.

Thus, all through the text, collaborative ministry will be presented as fundamental not because of its use among the agents of evangelization through communication, but more, because of its active role in the process of inculturation through dialogue in relation to the agents of evangelization. As it were, religions, human co-operation and cultural humanity are not strangers to the advantage of collaboration, dialogue, and inculturation, which make for healthy and cordial relationships as they form the connecting link of the dissertation.

88 AMECEA, *The African Synod Comes Home*, Nairobi: Paulines Publications, 1995, p. 27.

Since our thesis has to do with collaboration and mutual dialogue as they relate to the agents of evangelization working in harmony, it is important to realize too that the progress of the Gospel message in terms of incarnation, has to do immensely with the process of inculturation that unites it with the culture that is receiving it. This requires a dialogue of its nature whereby both the Gospel and the receiving culture enrich each other through the expressive lives of the agents of evangelization in their pastoral activities and liturgical celebrations. In this process, the role of a good leader is very important.

From our discussion of the theories, we might infer that leadership is service in the sense that it seeks to meet the aims and objectives of a community or group by being faithful in performing needed functions and in collaboration with all the members involved. In every venture, we need to set individual efforts in the context of the general objective. These theories help us to learn that leaders are expected to establish a conducive climate that will be healthy for the development of human personalities within their domain. In relation to our Church leaders, that “they have to keep the Church’s organization in the forefront of all activities through functions such as goal setting, planning, organizing, programming, motivating, coordinating, and evaluating”⁸⁹, while at the same time, respecting individual gifts. This is where self-knowledge is necessary in the fact that pastoral leaders are not there only to develop others, but should also bear in mind that they are to develop themselves and their self-images.

A servant leader after the model of Christ “embodying the gospel message of reconciliation and freedom in his personhood and in his relationship with others, must be emotionally mature, competent in a variety of areas, and able to engage people on a deeply personal level. Meditating the ‘good news’ through personal presence and dialogue, demands the following abilities: to reflect upon oneself and one’s interior state; to accept oneself with both strengths and weaknesses; to trust in the basic goodness of one’s body and emotions; to integrate these and use them in relating to other persons in mutual dialogue and collaboration. This means, to allow others to be themselves; to transcend the

89 D’Souza, Leadership and effective management, *Op. cit.*, p. 15

images and stereotypes that ordinarily interfere with a genuine encounter; and to practice existential humour, which manifests itself only at the higher stages of development⁹⁰. In as much as this presentation helps in the interpretation of the problem, it will also be of immense help to us when we apply it further in our intervention.

⁹⁰ The Center of Human Development, The Challenge of 1990s: Formation of Priests, (1990), p. 26.

CHAPTER IV

IGBO SYSTEM OF COLLABORATION IN THE CONTEXT OF AFRICAN TRADITIONAL WORLD-VIEW

Having presented the necessary theories for reflection, our concern here is to present the anthropological characteristic nature of the Igbo community life as expressed in her traditional world-view. In view of our thesis topic that has to do with poor inculturation and poor clergy-laity collaboration as opposed to true fraternal spirit of cooperation, we will make effort, while presenting the Igbo worldview, to treat in this chapter the various ways the Igbo people function with one another in relationship with the divine realities and forces around them, even before the advent of Christianity. This will help us to understand the functional spirit of their collaboration which used to be wholistic oriented. As regards the collaborative life of the Igbos, it will be wise to explore into the communal system of their life existence. The communal life-style of the Igbo people is entirely tied to their traditional religion, which knits together all the aspects of their being.

In their traditional religion, the entire cosmos is viewed in its totality (visible and invisible) and is regarded as being sacred. Professor A. Ekwunife sees it as the “invisible penetrating the visible through a unique Being”. Trying to find out why Igbo family is said to be sacred, he responded thus: “The Igbo family is sacred because it reflects wholeness in unity of being. Certain persons, objects and places are sacred because they manifest this wholeness of being either symbolically or in actuality”. For him, “Places and things are sacred in so far as they reflect the unity of beings which they symbolize”. He further stated: “the sacred is not only associated with power, but it is also affiliated with the highest values in human life such as: honesty, justice, gentleness, patience, endurance, perseverance, sincerity in one's word, etc. A sacred person is expected to mirror these values”¹. Following

¹ Interview with A.N.O. Ekwunife, lecturer at the University of Nsukka, Department of Religion. He also lectures as a visiting Professor in SIST Major Seminary, Attakwu, Enugu State, Nigeria. See also his article, “*Integration of Traditional African Values in Priestly Formation*” in *AFER* (African Ecclesial Review), vol. 39, n. 4, 1997.

this view, Igbo traditional religion includes sacred institutions like the customary “laws and customs, practices, organization and other elements in the political or social life of the people”² that bind them together. The binding realities involve God, spirits, ancestors, traditional priests and the living. There is the spirit of collaboration, understanding, respect, affinity of love and concern that prevail within the life forces that are knit together and influence one another.

As it were, the Igbo nature of living as a communal entity helps to manifest their world-view system among the living and in relationship with the divine influences. In handling this task, we will focus on the essential collaborative characteristics of the Igbo people in view of their extended family system, a guide that will help us to handle the analysed problems. The anthropological dynamism of the Igbos is tied to the extended family system, which is one of the fundamental sources of our research. This will enable us to handle this chapter under the following major headlines: (1) an x-ray of Igbo traditional religious world-view, (2) communalism in the context of Igbo traditional world-view, (3) traditional government, and (4) the conclusion. This part will enlarge the earlier summary presentation at the beginning of this dissertation.

1. Igbo traditional religious world-view

Our concentration here is to show the cultural life of the Igbos with due respect to their traditional religious world-view. Igbo people’s spirit of collaboration is tied to the ancestral relationship that unites families, clans and tribal communities. Thus, Igbo community in general consists of the “*visible*” and the “*invisible*” realities. The visible world, called “*uwa*” in Igbo land, consists of ‘*igwe na ala*’, the firmament and the earth. In it are the human beings (*mmadu*), animals (*anumanu*), forests (*mkpa*), rivers (*osimiri*), the sun (*anyanwu*), the moon (*onwa*), the stars (*kpakpandu*), etc ³. The invisible world in the “*uwa mmuo*” and it is where the spirits of all kinds inhabit: *Chukwu*, the Supreme creator, the deities “*ndi mmuo*”, who manifest themselves through such natural phenomenon as the

2 P.M. Anene-Mmua, Approach to the Inculturation of African Traditional Rituals and Political Institutions in the Church, Nigeria-Enugu: Snaap Press, 1998, p. 61.

3 *Ibid.* p. 61.

sky, the thunder, and the mother earth. Then, we have the ancestors and the “*ogbunike*”. Ogbunike refers to that which is evil, and is used to be attributed to the wandering spirits of the dead, those who lived bad lives on earth. A person who was good, popular and of a reputable character while living on earth, would joined the community of the ancestors, (*Ndi-ichie*) after his death.

Thus, Igbo worldview presents itself as a single, fluid and coherent unit in which spirits, men, animals, plants and the elements are engaged in continuous interaction. The invisible world of the spirit, “*uwa muo*”, and the visible world, “*uwa mmadu*”, shed into and mutually influence each other⁴. Generally, in Igbo traditional societies, religion and social life are so closely intertwined that they can hardly be separated, as their world-view is holistic and collaborative⁵. There is hardly any distinction between matter and spirit, the profane and the sacred, the superior and the inferior, as every effort is made to live in harmony with all the influential forces in their typical nature, the highest of which is the Supreme Being. “The sense of the personal totality of all beings, and of a humanity which embraces the living, the dead and the divinities, fills the background of the primal world-view”⁶. For clarity of purpose, we shall handle this world-view under the following points: (1) belief in the Supreme Being, (2) arch-deities and minor deities, (3) ancestral collaborative veneration and (4) the traditional priests.

1.1. Belief in the Supreme Being

The Igbo belief system recognizes God as the Supreme Being and minor deities as intermediaries or messengers of God in relationship to man. Generally, the essential elements of any religion comprise of beliefs, rites and rituals, moral codes and ministers and in Igbo traditional religion, none of these is lacking. These are sacred religious belief systems that gave credence to man and his beingness. The traditional religion of Igbo is

4 F. Ikenga., “*The nature of African Theism*” in E.E. Uzukwu (ed.), *Religion and African Culture*, Nigeria-Enugu: Snaap Press, 1988, p. 62.

5 *Ibid.*, p. 61.

6 A.N.O. Ekwunife, *Op. cit.*, page n.a,

centred on their belief in the Supreme God, higher deities, minor deities who are non-human and the spirit of their ancestors. Normally, the traditional priest or the head of the family or clan offers sacrifices as a mark of the solidarity-will of the living with the dead. Hence the priest's office is as sacred as any holy object, as he would try to maintain a good collaboration between the living and the dead. This is realized through communal clan prayers, pouring of libations and constant efforts to maintain peace and justice. The moral code is very strict and binding on all members of the community and no defaulter goes away completely free and without retribution or suitable sacrifice for atonement to the deities of the land⁷. Through these and other processes, the living maintains a good spirit of collaboration with the dead who reciprocate with love and protection for the living. Generally Africans, and particularly the Igbos of Nigeria, have different ways of demonstrating their spirit of collaboration with God, whom they see and adore as the creator of the world, who in turn, cares for His people.

Different attributes of God help to show to what extent the Igbo people believe and worship the Supreme God: *Chukwu* (The Supreme God), *Chi-ne-ke* (God the creator), *Obasi bi n'Igwe* (God who lives in heaven), *Ama-ma-amasighi-amasi* (Omniscience of God). This belief is also expressed in the traditional names the Igbo people give to their children: *Chinedu* (God, who guides and leads), *Chizobam* (God saves me), *Chukwu di ebere* (God is merciful). The Igbos do not have cultic images or statues of the Supreme God, for they cannot conceive his likeness. His existence is deeply ingrained in their minds and lives, and their effort is to cooperate and collaborate with the Supreme plan for His created beings. This belief is also expressed by such names they give to their children: *Chukwuma* (God knows), *Chi-ne-nye* (God is the giver), *Odi-na-ka-Chukwu* (It is in the hands of God or God provides).

Another way of showing reverence to God is when something happens suddenly to an Igbo-man, he cries out consciously or unconsciously, calling on God to intercede as He cares for His people. Through this expression, they also demonstrate their regard for God

7 Cf. R. A. Njoku, The Advent of The Catholic Church in Nigeria, Nigeria-Owerri: Assumpta Press, 1980, p. 15.

as the protector of life, who has the spirit of collaboration with the universe and He respects His created beings and their intelligence. Thus, He deserves their honour, praise and worship. Such acclamations are: *Chukwu-ekwela* (God forbid), *Chineke-é!* (Oh God), *Chimu* (Oh my God) and etc. When a “gift” is given, it is believed that, indirectly, it is God who willed it, hence, it is a spontaneous expression of appreciation to Him, first of all, and then to the donor. This is reflected in the names the Igbos give to their children: *Kelechi* (Give thanks to God), *Chi-eme-ka* (God has done good things), *Chukwu-ebuka* (God is great), and *Ngozi-Chukwu* (God’s blessing).

All these expressions show that the Igbos have high regard for God as the Supreme Being who is everything spiritually for them. They see God as all-powerful, (*Omni-potent*), all knowing (*Omniscient*) and all merciful, who deserves their response due to Him in the spirit of collaboration through prayers, reverence and attributes. It is important to note that every Igbo prayer begins first with songs of praise, followed with prayers for thanksgiving to God in appreciation of His goodness to the living. Then, appreciation is also shown to the deities and ancestors who are the intermediaries between God and Man. Finally, it ends with a solicitation for the living, depending on the nature of the intention. God, for the Igbo man, is too high to be comprehended and is so revered to the extent that, at times, contacts through prayers are made through the minor gods and ancestors who are regarded as the messengers of the Supreme God. The living try to show their collaboration with these intermediaries whose wraths could also be fatal when things go wrong.

1.2 Arch-deities and minor deities

These high deities and minor deities in the Igbo system are regarded as messengers of the Supreme God. They play the role of intermediary between the Creator and human beings, and are believed to be nearer to God because of their nature. The living tend to collaborate or treat them with respect. These include the *amadi-oha*, (the deity of thunder), *anyanwu* (the sun deity), and *igwe* (the sky deity), as earlier addressed in the introductory section. We have to remember here that we are dealing with a pre-scientific era and not as life is now in modern Igboland.

The minor deities are commonly called *nde muo* (divinities), *agbara nwe ala* (the earth goddess), *agwushi*, according to the different localities that have their cults. Each acknowledged spirit has its own shrine called *ihu-muo* or *ihu-agbara* and its own priest, *ezemuo*. In Mbutu-Ngwa, my home town, there used to be an official ceremony to mark the mutual collaboration that existed between the deities and the living, called *mkpe*, where all the deities symbolized by carved statues that represented different ancestors of the 16 villages that make up *Mbutu Ama-Iri-na-Isii*, would be assembled in a pantheon “great market square (ahia orie) for the celebration. There would be a libation poured in honour of the ancestors (through wine that was poured on the central shrine) who commune with the living – we shall see more of the ancestors later. Generally, there would be sacrifice, music, traditional dance and other displays and merriments to mark the colourful occasion. All these were done in honour of the spirit intermediaries, which included the higher deities.

1.2.1 The higher deities

Among the high deities is the *amadioha* (thunder deity) that collaborates with the living by protecting the just people of God and gradually eliminating the mischievous ones in the society. The spirit of *amadioha* is responsible for just vengeance. Outside the *Ofo*, which is a symbol of peace; this spirit, *amadioha*, helps in maintaining justice in the land. It strikes and kills witches and wizards who involve themselves in plotting evil against others. Its weapon or instrument of operation is normally through lightening or thunder. It is widely believed in Igboland that lightening does not strike in vain; somebody must be the victim, the culprit, and the unjust.

The world of the Igbos could be better referred to as a *moral universe* in the sense that nothing happens without a cause. Thus, every type of sickness, from a severe headache to a stomach upset, is attributed to the forces, evil spirits, witchcraft, angry forces, and machination of enemies in the form of sorcery (*ogwu or nsi*). In a situation like this, a traditional medicine expert is consulted and, through a divination processes, he discovers the cause(s) of the sickness and offers sacrifice to appease the power concerned. At this juncture, Rose Njoku commented that Igbo people believe that every effect has a cause: *ihe anaghi eme na nkiti* (things do not happen by chance). They have a strong belief in

retributive justice. They say that if a man's sin escapes detection by his fellow men, the deities, who see what happens below the surface of the earth, do not fail to dish out appropriate punishment as they work in collaboration with the living. If a man is involved in an accident or sudden sickness or death, their first remark would be *onye ma nke ometara* (who knows what offence he has committed). If death and misfortune befall a particular family, they can't claim innocence. The elders will say that it didn't happen by chance. The deities will have done their justice or it may be the action of the evil ones. Nevertheless, there is a belief in natural death (*onwu chi*) also – but in most cases, it is accepted as the last resort.

Sacrifice becomes an essential means of collaborating with the higher beings on the part of the living. Death through the god of thunder demands a special sacrifice and burial in *ohia ojoo* (the evil forest). *Amadioha* is regarded in Igboland as the “god of force and fire”, the god-messenger of punishment who sends down the anger of God (*Chineke*) upon offenders. The *belief that lightening goes to a specified location is still the strong belief that amadioha does not strike without cause*⁸.

The other high deities such as *anyanwu* (the sun god) and *igwe* (the sky god) have their respective shrines where they are revered. Each community had its own way of allegiance to any of the deities. These were very powerful as they were believed to have come from heaven and the messages they brought, were very direct, too. The influence of *igwe ka ala of Umunnoha*, near Owerri, in Imo State, was felt by people of far and near. Before its shrine was destroyed by Christianity and government administration, people travelled a long distance on foot to consult *igwe ka ala of Umunnoha*⁹ to determine their future and the root causes of their misfortune, as there was a traditional priest responsible for it.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

1.2.2 The minor deities

In the classification order of divinities, the minor deities follow the major deities, which are personifications of the things that happen in the people's daily lives as signs of their collaboration with the living. In Mbutu-Ngwa, my home town, there existed a deity known as *adibita-adighara* (meaning that no condition is permanent, life changes). This deity, like the god of thunder, used to punish the native offenders. It afflicted sicknesses to women married in this village who would divorce their husbands and remarry without plausible and justifiable reasons. It is believed that these women would gradually wear away through unidentifiable sickness until they finally died a miserable death after so many years of suffering. Equally, it treated men in the same way if they were to go against the moral law of the land. This shrine was destroyed by the early missionaries.

Each clan has a custodial responsibility for the land as well as its own minor deity that guides it. These deities play important roles in the daily life of the people. Constant sacrifices are offered to them through their respective priests (*dibia ala*) in order to maintain a harmony with them. According to Cardinal Arinze, *ala* is the great *mother spirit*, the queen of the underworld, the owner of men and custodian of public morality in conjunction with the ancestors¹⁰. *Ala* played the most important role in the lives of the people than any other deity in Igboland. She was also regarded as the source of all fertility. Certain serious offences are considered as *nso ala* (abominations against the earth goddess). These include: personal and moral digressions such as incest, adultery, patricide, suicide by hanging and pregnancy within one year of a husband's death. It can also include something like stealing of yams, etc.

In days past, there were acts regarded as abomination against the land goddess. These include giving birth to twins (*ejima*), excessiveness during child's birth, a child cutting an upper tooth first, a woman climbing a palm tree, killing of sacred animals and fighting a masquerade (*mmanwu*), which represents the image of an ancestor appearing during burial ceremonies. A marriage between people of the same kindred and sexual

¹⁰ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 7.

cohabitation between them is forbidden. Such acts are regarded as *iru-ala*, (abominations) against the land goddess. This explains why those who had twins in Igbo land were not spared before the coming of Christianity. The twins would not be allowed to see the light of the day as they were found to be abnormal. They were put in a pot and thrown into *ajoo ohia* (evil forest) as they were found to be abnormal. Should there be any sexual relationship between a boy and a girl of the same clan or village (*umu-nna*), there would be a sacrifice of expiation (*ikpu-ala*) or purification. Igbo land would cleans the two of them in a ritual officiated by the native priest. These were done out of ignorance as they were regarded as abnormal.

Another important aspect of collaboration in the life of the Igbo people is their relationship with their personal guardian spirit called *chi*. It has been a popular notion that the differentiation factor of the people's behaviour is attributed to their individual 'chi', or guarding spirit. A man's success or failure is attributed to his personal 'chi' as explained earlier. Hence, there exist such expressions as: *Onye na chi ya* (Each person and his own personal god/spirit), *Chi gi amaka* (You are fortunate /you have a good guarding spirit), *O bu onye chi ojo* (He is unfortunate / he is unlucky).

These personal spirits are compared to guardian angels in Catholic belief and their functions are the same. The Igbos believe that this personal *chi* guards a man from birth to the grave. However, a distinction should be made between the 'personal *chi*' and the Supreme God known as *Chi-Ukwu*, meaning 'Chi' (God), "*Ukwu*" (greatest, highest). *Chi-Ukwu* or, when tailored together, we have (*Chukwu*) meaning the Supreme or the highest God, who is the creator of the universe. He guards everybody and everything that exist on earth. He is present in every creature through his manifestation of the minor *chi*. The other minor deities are at Supreme God's service including the ancestors.

1.3 Ancestor collaborative veneration

In Igbo traditional religion, there is the concept of belief in the ancestors who are regarded as part and parcel of the community of the living. The domestic family is the

simplest component of the kin-group. In Igboland, one talks of the nuclear family system, which embraces not only the parents and their immediate children as seen above, but is extended to incorporate relations: uncles, nephews and even the dead ancestors. Hence, a family embraces the living and the dead ancestors. For Mbiti, the dead ancestors are the “living dead”¹¹ because they are still remembered and communicated with. But who are the ancestors, one may ask?

The ancestors are the discarnate or deceased members of the community who, after their death, are still said to have a lot of influence on the living. This is because the Igbo in particular and Africans in general, believe that physical or biological death is not the end of life but only a necessary means to arriving at the full life of realization. It is a common phenomenon in Igbo land to foster a strong cordial collaborative relationship between the ancestors and their living descendants as they are said to be nearer to God as spirits. Can we then say that all the dead are qualified to be ancestors? In other words, what qualifies one as an ancestor?

1.3.1 Qualification

In Igboland, even in Africa as a whole, not all the dead people are qualified to be ancestors. The Igbo believed that if a man was not given a befitting burial ceremony, his soul would not rest in the spirit world, meaning that he would not be accepted in the other world and therefore, not qualified to be an ancestor. This was why the living relations tried to give worthy traditional funeral rites to their beloved fathers when they died. They believed that through a well-celebrated burial ceremony, the dead would be received to enter into the spirit world from where he would continue to intercede for his living relations. But, this type of ceremony was not given to all. In the words of Mbefo, it is given “to those heroes formed by the hopes of African traditional religion, those who, in various ways, contributed to the expansion of well-being among their contemporaries”¹². Suffice it

11 J. Mbiti, African Religions and Philosophy, Nairobi: East African Educational Publication, 1969, pp. 108, quoted in. C. Nyamiti, Christ as our Ancestor. Christology from an African Perspective, Zimbabwe: Mambo Press, 1984, p. 15.

12 L. Mbefo, Towards A Mature African Christianity, Nigeria-Enugu: Snaap Press Ltd, 1989, p. 67.

to say that this ceremony was only accorded to “those who made life more meaningful and more worth living for their progenitors”¹³. Talking of natural relationship between the ancestor and his earthly relatives, Nyamity based it on “parenthood” or, at times, on “brotherhood”. In this case, one can talk of parent/brother ancestor, which was seen in a close family or clan, tribe, religions or society. He concludes by maintaining that the basis of this natural relationship could be by sanguinity or non-consanguinity¹⁴.

Another qualification for an ancestorship is that the person must have not only mature and begotten children before his death, but also must have been a respectable and worthy gentleman, who died a natural death. Death, even till today, is seen as a necessary means for becoming an ancestor. Nyamity calls death a supernatural or sacred status to be acquired by an ancestor.

1.3.2 Collaborative role

The ancestors are considered to be concerned with the well-being of their living descendants because it is believed that, as discarnate spirits, they are nearer to God than the living. Thus, the African relationship with the ancestors is understood from the point of view of communality, the source of which is the extended family system. As earlier indicated, the ancestors are seen as the living dead who continue to guide the individuals, families and the whole community. The living members are in constant relationship with the ancestors. “There is an interrelationship in the way an African relates with the “living” and the “living-dead”, the ancestors and the way of relating to God”¹⁵. Marie Therese Gacambi maintains that the “ancestors and God, the creator, comprise the mystical family which does not separate the ‘sacred’ and the ‘secular’”¹⁶. Just as the members of the Church collaborate with the saints, so do the living members collaborate with their ancestors in Igboland. Like the saints, the ancestors play vital intermediary role between

13 *Ibid.*, p. 67.

14 C. Nyamiti, *Op. cit.*, 1984, p. 15

15 C. McGarry & P. Ryan (eds.), Inculturating the Church in Africa – Theological and Practical Perspective, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2001, p. 236.

16. M. T. Gacambi, “*Spiritual Formation of God’s Family*” in McGarry, *Op. cit.*, p. 236.

God and the people. Suffice it to say that the Igbo practice of ancestral veneration is a *fertile ground* for the Christian veneration of the Saints¹⁷ in our cultures.

It is important to note here that the ancestors are not worshipped in a way as God the creator is worshipped or adored. Rather, homage is paid to them; hence, we talk of the communion with the ancestors, or the veneration of the ancestors in Igboland.¹⁸ The veneration of ancestors is not generally performed as a cult of the dead, but as a celebration of life. This is why, once a family meal is brought, a few lumps are thrown out for the ancestors to participate in the communal banquet. When wine is brought, the eldest member of the family pours the libations (i.e. the first few drops of wine on the ground for the ancestors, before pouring to the gathered community. In times of need, suffering or crisis, the members of the community would gather together and make their prayers and petitions to God through these ancestors, who had lived their human life and know very well the problems of their people and the best way to present these petitions to God. It is believed that after having lived in history, the ancestors have become spirits who live with God as his messengers. Everything in human life that promote the harmony, perfection, good health, integrity, security, fulfilment of purpose, happiness, love and values etc., is what is sought and asked for through the ancestors who collaborate with their living ones and whose protective functions are continued by the living chiefs or the traditional priests.

1.4 The traditional priest

The modern priest faces a major challenge in his pastoral work due to the conflict between the concept of the priest and the expectation that the traditional Igbo man places on the institution of priesthood. The traditional priest is culturally important because, by virtue of his position, he is usually a medicine man and a fortune-teller at the same time. The belief in him as the link between human beings and the ancestors has been held in the minds of the people through generations and still holds up strongly even in the minds of some Christians today. The priest healer, in the traditional sense, is an expert doctor who administers medicine, following the dictates of the ancestors in any given situation. He provides solution to analysed problems as he prays to God. The traditional priest conveys

¹⁷ C. Nyamiti, *Op. cit.*, 1984, p. 15

¹⁸ Cf. J. Kenyatta, Facing Mount Kenya, the life of the Kikuyu, London: Secker & Warburg Press, 1938.

the messages of the gods, gives guidance to his patients, uncovers the past, explains the present in the light of the past, and foretells the future. All these depend on the situation, the problem and its cause. He takes a more holistic approach to treatment considering the physical viewpoint of the ailment as well as looking at the social and spiritual views of the patient. Sickesses are assumed to be traditionally caused by ill-will or evil actions of one person against another (especially one's enemies). From this point of view, a traditional priest is not only a medicine man dealing with physical ailments but also a spiritual pastor, a psychiatrist, a counsellor and the ultimate wonder worker. His integral approach to healing as a whole, the body, soul, and spirit along with the control of the environment including his religious and cultural milieu, makes people hold in high regard the powers on his belief system. More particularly, his religious role as intermediary between the living and the dead ancestors, including the spirits of the underworld, adds more credence to his personality within the communal life of the people.

2. Communalism in the context of traditional world-view

The traditional religious world-view, as presented above, is a tight knit relationship between the living and the "living dead" or the ancestors and the existential realities. This means that the living members are in constant communal relationship with the invisible realities. From the point of view of the living, the term "communalism" in relation to "individualism" tends to be apparently contradictory but it highlights a harmonious and praxeological inter-relationship or collaborative spirit that exists among the people. This involves African or Igbo community consciousness as opposed to the spirit of individualism. "If individualism could not improve the lot of man in the society, 'communalism' appears as a veritable alternative"¹⁹. Nevertheless, we shall still have to touch on "individualism" as an entity and as it relates to a community later. We shall handle this issue of communalism under these subheadings: (1) understanding communalism within the context, (2) Igbo solidarity-will, (3) the concept of communal life, and (4) communalism and individual freedom in Igboland. These four points in their

19 C. Ekei, Justice in Communalism – A foundation of Ethics in African Philosophy, Nigeria-Lagos: Smagh & Co Ltd, 2001, p. 193.

different perspectives, will help to demonstrate the spirit of collaboration in the Igbo system of relationship.

2.1 Understanding communalism within the context

Communalism at times is used analogously with other terms such as “fraternalism”²⁰ that goes with “vital participation” through sharing of experiences in common. The life of Igbos generally is spelt out more in sharing experiences both positive and negative. These are “fraternal” relationships when they have to do with members within and outside of a micro family-system as they are of the same tribal or societal origin. Webster’s dictionary²¹ presents communalism as a loyalty and commitment to the interests of one’s own minority or ethnic group rather than to the society as a whole. But the communalism we are exploring here is not limited to one’s ethnic group only, as defined by the Webster’s Dictionary, but expands further to the society that practices it. Neither is it confounded to communism²² as practiced in Europe, which disassociates itself from religion and morality and capitalizes on economic welfare of the Proletarian group as propounded by Karl Marx (1818-1883) and Friedrich Engels (1820-1895). Nor is African communalism to be compared with French theory of government that capitalizes on “communal” or fraternal relationship as independent states and having a national confederation government of such states that has a limited power. This type of practiced

20 C.B. Nze, Aspects of African Communalism, Nigeria-Onitsha: Veritas Publishers, 1989, pp. 5-6; see also M.M Green, Igbo Village Affairs, London: Frank Cass Publication, 1964, in J.C. Ekei, *Ibid.* p. 193.

21 Cf. Webster’s Dictionary, 1913.

22 Communism, as associated with Marxism, is also known as “Revolutionary Proletarian Socialism,” and seen as his economic and political philosophy of liberation. The details of Communism is contained within the text of *The Communist Manifesto*, published by Karl Marx in 1848, and based on Friedrich Engels’ first draft, *Principles of Communism*. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels are regarded as the co-authors of “The Communist Manifesto” in fulfilment of the Communist League ambition for a revolutionary society change in Europe that rose against people of higher rank, the bourgeoisie. The primary purpose of *The Communist Manifesto* was to outline the theory of *Class Struggle* and incite the Proletarian to revolt against their masters as the idea was to redefine the form of government that would give freedom to the lower class, whose economic policy was to do away with the Bourgeoisie class, thus freeing the Proletariat from the yoke of their Bourgeoisie “masters.” Furthermore, this system of government demanded the abolition of both Religion and the Absolute Morality founded upon Religion. The intention was that Communism ‘supposedly attempts to enhance civility within society by aiming at the removal of all notions of Absolute Morality, the very cornerstone of civility’. But unfortunately, after Communism had been instituted by Karl Marx and Engels, the system turned out to become Totalitarian, resulting in greater oppression of the people it was earlier designed to “serve.” More of this fact is well documented throughout the history of Communist nations – (Cf. Copyright © 2002 - 2004 Communism-1.com)

communism of Marx and Engels turned out to become totalitarianism, resulting in greater oppression of the people it was earlier designed to “serve”. No! Our communalism goes beyond communism of the West and Communal fraternity of the French.

For Rev. Professor Chukwuemeka Ekei, “fraternalism” is basic to the concept of the Igbo “communalism”, though, it is not per se synonymous with it, due to its restricted meaning. In other words, if fraternity is like communalism, it is in so far as both are “welfare-oriented.” But even at that, in practical application and cultural orientation, Igbo communalism is much deeper than mere fraternalism in our context. In the first place “fraternalism” aims at meeting the welfare of blood relatives, and people of “some parental link”²³. Here are the views of some of our elderly men in Igboland of Nigeria concerning the spirit of communalism. For 85 years old *Nwaeze*, the reason is “defence – togetherness which helps to ward off foreign invaders and enemies”. For 75 years old Mazi Ikwunne, the essence of communalism is more of socio-political cum religious reasons, which means “man’s relationship with other beings” – He holds that “kinship tie is at the root of people living together because it helps them to share their lives and their destinies”. He believes that “through communal relationship man extends his horizon towards cosmic realities as well as towards the metaphysical realm of the deities and ancestors”. Rev. Ichie Okoye Anaekwu sees man as a “fisherman’s net” as he calls him *Ibolo – mmadu bu Ibolo* (man is a network of relationship). As social beings, human beings live and function together and under such social arrangement; people feel that they belong and that their needs are taken care of communally²⁴. But in our context, communalism is more than social relationship as explained by Mazi Ikwunne, it has a religious undertone.

Communalism in our context has to do with “the welfare of man as a ‘being with others” in a family close relationship. For the Igbos, the conception of family consists of all the common ancestors that could be remembered in history. An Igbo man talks of an extended family system which includes all the traceable blood relations of *umunna*. This great family is looked after by its traditional ancestors, who, though are dead, but are still

23 J. Chukwuemeka Ekei, *Op. cit.*, p. 193.

24 *Ibid.*, p. 199.

regarded as having much influence on the lives of the living. Ancestors are the custodians of the society and are thought to be in a permanent relationship with the living as they play the role of intermediary between the people and the Supreme Being, God Himself as previously presented. For the Igbo, ancestors form one community with their living ones. This is why the villages or towns are named after their respective great ancestors. These are sure signs of ancestral influences in the lives of their family members or society. These influences help to maintain the spirit of communalism. Generally, the sense of the sacred is concretely manifested through the Igbo concept of *umunna*, the root of *umunnarism*.

In our context, what it means is that “humanity is sacred because of its vital link with transcendental realities of the world in its wholeness. The sense of the sacred is concretely manifested through the traditional concept of corporate existence or communalism. It is a relationship with the environmental existing realities, the visible and the invisible. In Igboland it can be translated to mean *idinotu or mmekolita umunna*. As it were, it depicts a “sense of communion, the openness of man to man”²⁵, operating within a wider milieu with higher beings that influence the nature. It implies a sense of implicit collaboration, the core and concern for man as a being that coexists and functions with other beings. “It is therefore regarded as a “feeling that one is involved with others”, “irrespective of their parental affiliations”²⁶ or tribal sentiments. It is the practice of communal living and a common committed responsibility that takes care of the society at large. Rev. Agbonkhianmeghe Orobator (a Nigerian Jesuit priest) tries to explain communalism with the same ambience of “collaborative sharing of experience and talents” when he argues: “in Igboland, life epitomizes a collaboration as people communally work together by sharing experiences and talents for the building up of a community. The context of this sharing is the extended family, the clan, the village and the wider community, the society”²⁷ which is more expressed in the context of solidarity-will.

25 C.B. Okolo, “*What is to be African?*”, p. 11 in J.C. Ekei, *Ibid.*, p. 193.

26 *Ibid.*, p. 193.

27 Cf. A.E. Orobator, *The Church As Family – African Ecclesiology in Its Social Context*, Nairobi: Paulines Publicationc Africa, 2000, p. 154.

2.2 Solidarity-will

Some humanitarian philosophers do consider the spirit of communalism in line with “solidarity and complementarity”. This is with a view to identifying it sympathetically with the problem of human limitations. Ekei regards such solidarity as a motivating factor that underscores his research programme on the study of Igbo Ethics, when he writes:

Our study so far under the object of Igbo ethics has been an effort to highlight man’s concerted actions, and behaviour as a collective response towards checking the limiting factors of human predicament. In other words, the limitations surrounding human existence are such that without mutual co-operations, co-existence, and relationship, human life is likely to be highly precarious²⁸.

Ekei really understood the African life and Igbo chain of relationship as “bearing with” and “being with”²⁹, to use Heidegger’s language for *Dasein* (man in community), in Igbo land, as “man-in-relation-to-others”, which is the basis of communal justice, or justice-in-communalism”³⁰. Igbo express this well in one of their popular sayings: “*otu nkpisi aka ruta mmanu, o zue oha*” which *literally* means that if one finger gets soaked with palm oil, it spreads to the rest of the fingers. What effects one-member affects the rest of *umunna* (communal kindred), joys, progress, sorrows, misfortunes, etc., are all shared together. This means that a tree cannot make a forest, multitude is power. These proverbial expressions try to explain the enormous implication of collective responsibility or corporate morality. The philosophical foundation of this is based on the fact that since the community is rooted in a series of blood relationships between men and men, women and women and men and women, there is a recognition that all men are connected and, as such, function in collaboration, in communalism,³¹ and even as a societal entity.

Communalism as practised particularly in Igboland as I know it emphasizes the role of human involvement towards the amelioration of the existential human predicament, is a

28 J. Chukwuemeka Ekei, *Op. cit.*, p. 195.

29 J. Macquarrie, *Martin Heidegger’s Notion of Dasein, Man as a “Being With*, London: Lutterworth Press, 1968, p. 18 in Ekei, *Op. cit.*, p. 85.

30 J. Chukwuemeka Ekei, *Op. cit.*, p. 85.

31 C.B. Nze, “*Aspects of African Communalism*”, p. 2 in Ekei, *Ibid.* p. 85.; Cf. F. Ogbalu, *Ilu Igbo, (The Book of Igbo Proverb)*, Nigeria-Onitsha: University Press, 1968, p. 8.

challenge that is collectively taken up, bearing in mind that we have one Ancestral Father, *Chukwu*. It puts an emphasis on the importance of “being in solidarity with”, and in “trying to countervail the forces of human limitations, human scarcity, powerlessness and ambivalence.”³². When the need arises for sympathy that is either based on sentimental feelings or from a commitment that comes from one’s involvement in being part of or belonging to, it becomes enduring and dynamic and is more visible in the communal spirit. The first premise that has to do with sentimental feelings out of sympathy should not be taken too seriously here because it could increase on an individual levels towards the less privileged that may or may not be sustained for a long time depending on the commitment. The reason for such sympathy may be “based merely on individual or communal feelings and sentiments. Or, as it were, it may rest on other transient contingencies, not deeply rooted, but as a way of maintaining justice and equity”³³. In a situation like this, “sympathy seems to disappear once the source of feeling is no longer obvious in a given situation. In this case, communality, the outcome of collaborative orientation, helps to sustain the enduring process of sharing the limited resources”³⁴ and the problem together. Truly speaking, solidarity must be defined within the context of communalism, as its end products are progress and easy achievement of a course. By its nature, it cuts across ethnic and social boundaries and concentrates on the other as a related being, as a brother or a sister of a common family of God, the Father of all. This spirit helps to resolve individual problems communally.

For instance, in most clans, we have common ownership of land called *ohia onumara* (tribal land). During farming season, it is shared amongst the legitimate members by portioning it to all the first male children (the eldest male child of each nuclear family). Everybody cooperates to see that all families get their share in this collective ownership of land. But should there be a problem that involves much financial expenses, regardless of whom it befalls within the community, communal effort will be made to settle it. The last

³² *Ibid.*, p. 194.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 194.

³⁴ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 193.

resort would be for the communal land or property to be pledged out so that money would be realized for the settlement of the prevailing problem.

However, we have to be careful to make a clear distinction between “Solidarity”, “Communalism” and “Humanism” since they all have to do with human welfare. “It is the interest which communalism has in man’s welfare that seems to mistake or tie it with ‘solidarity-will’, ‘collaboration’ or with ‘humanism’ per se”³⁵. But communalism is not just concerned with human behaviour and existence’ for humanism or solidarity is used more to designate collaboration, working as a team, and in empathy for others. It is rather seen as a mode of being in which one belongs to as an integral entity within a community³⁶. Implicitly, in our context, it designates communal collaboration, a spirit that characterizes the life of the Igbo people. Having carefully bracketed the seeming terms, in relation to communalism, what then is particular about it in the African context and in Igboland in particular?

2.3 Concept of communal life

It was John Mbiti, in his book, *African Religion and Philosophy*, who presented the popular conception of “African Communal life”, by maintaining that in African traditional set up, it is not the individual that counts but rather the community. He then propounds the maxim: “*I am because we are; and since we are, therefore, I am*”³⁷. For Mbiti, an individual “owes his existence to other people, including those of past generations and his contemporaries. He is simply part of the whole. The community must therefore make, create or produce the individual”³⁸. He summarily presented this as follows:

Only in terms of other people, does the individual become conscious of his own being, his own duties, his privileges and responsibilities towards himself and towards other people. When he suffers, he does not suffer alone but with the co-operate group.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 193.

³⁶ Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 193-194.

³⁷ J. Mbiti, *Op. cit.*, 1969, pp. 108-109.

³⁸ J. Mbiti, *The Reprinted text of African Religions and Philosophy*, London: Heinemann Publication, 1977, p. 34.

When he rejoices, he rejoices not alone but with his kinsmen, his neighbours and his relatives whether dead or living. When he gets married, he is not alone; neither does the wife belong to him alone. In the same way, the children belong to the corporate body of kinsmen even if they bear only the father's name. Whatever happens to the individual, the individual can only say, I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am³⁹.

The existence of an individual, his responsibilities and privileges are all spelt out in the collaborative communal spirit in which he/she belongs. As Mbiti presents it here, life is not lived in isolation nor are activities carried out single-mindedly, but in collaboration, in a co-operation with others. Africans live and work in groups as a cooperate body. Orabator confirms this communal existence as the core of life for Africans when he writes: "for Africans, human existence makes sense primarily on the communal context"⁴⁰. Simon Bockie shares the same view when he holds that "no one speaks of 'my life' separated from 'our life' in African context, embodying the individuals in a web of communal relationship"⁴¹. The emphasis here is on the *relatedness* that provokes a total commitment in reasoning that when community is, I am; when it is not, I am not. In other words, my existence is relevant and fruitful only in the fulfilment of the community's aspiration. Without the existence of the community, my existence becomes dull and meaningless⁴². Amuluchi Gregory Nnamani shares the same view when trying to explain associations or collaborations in respect to individuals; he brings it closer to our object of discussion. Regarding an African family, he notes:

Nothing is more central in the life of an African than that of the family. His/her personality and vision of reality are largely defined in terms of his/her family association. His/her being and existence is not proved by thought as Descartes would want us to believe, but by his/her family relationship. S/he is because s/he belongs to a family. If s/he does not relate to his/her family, a sense of emptiness or meaninglessness sets in⁴³.

39 *Ibid.*, p. 108.

40 A.E. Orabator, *Op. cit.*, p. 154.

41 S. Bockie, Death and the Invisibility Powers: The world of Congo belief, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993, p. 10 in Orabator, *Ibid.*, p. 154.

42 Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 154.

43 A. G. Nnamani, "*The African Synod and the Model of Church-as-family*", in Elochukwu E. Uzukwu (ed.), The African Synod: Initial Results and Reflections, *Op. cit.*, pp. 41-55.

What Nnamani is trying to present is that being committed in the African system involves total communal collaborative activities that give meaning to individual life. In other words, life outside community is not worth it. One's effort is much more commended when it is done within the community. Orobator reflected on this type of total commitment of Africans in a collaborative effort, like Christ emptying of himself for humanity, makes such a pertinent remark: "This observation concerning the way Africans understand communal life underscores the quality of '*expandability*' of life or more accurately of human relationship in Africa. It also implies the notion of 'vital participation of communal life in all its dimensions'"⁴⁴. Such an issue of vital commitment for the realization of a set up goal is explained by Kwame Bediako as implying active "participation in a common life and in its resources and powers that constitutes community"⁴⁵. Magesa sees this communal spirit that is very absolving as the "imperative of relationship" or "bondedness" which forms a key dimension of life in Africa"⁴⁶, as it demonstrates the extent of willingness and successfulness individuals have for a common project. Suffice it to say that communalism or collaboration as practised in Africa, designates the spirit of co-responsibility, active and dedicated participation in common activities. But has this spirit of common life no effect on the individual "self" if we are to follow the definition of Mbiti strictly? Perhaps, an insight on other views of thought on communalism will help us to understand very well the role of individual persons within a community set up.

2.4 Communalism and individual freedom in Igboland

Communalism as seen above is a system of life that "involves active participation of all the members of *umunna* community in whatever concerns the community, and at all levels of life in Igboland"⁴⁷. What is fundamental here is the spirit of *communalism*, which is tied to the ancestral relationship among the people who have a common Great Father, God who has the ancestors as part of His intermediaries for dealing with His people. For the

44 Orobator, *Op. cit.*, p. 154.

45 B. Bediako, "*Christianity in Africa*", p. 103 quoted in Orobator, *Ibid.*, p. 154.

46 Magesa, Laurenti, *The Church and Liberation in Africa*. Spearhead Series, no. 44, Kenya: Eldoret Gaba Publication, 1976 in Orobator, *Op. cit.*, p. 154.

47 Cf. P. Iroegbu, *Ibid.*, p. 23.

Igbos, ancestors form one community with their living ones as discussed earlier. Commenting on this, Uchendu has this to say, especially, as it affects the Igbos:

Community spirit is very strong among Igbo people. Almost from the first, the individual is aware of his dependence on his kin group and his community. He also realizes the necessity of making his own contribution to the group to which he owes so much. He seldom, if ever, becomes really detached from the group wherever he may live⁴⁸.

In Igbo family, there exists a type of teamwork whereby everybody strives to survive and to prosper through the help of close relations in the spirit of collaboration. This is because there is the belief that what affects one of the members of the family affects all the rest. They operate on the principle of “*rururu bu ugwu Eze*” or “*umunna bu ike*” which means “unity is strength”. The members are always dedicated to collaborative duty especially when they are “recognized and respected”, and this is one of the characteristic phenomena of the Igbos that however, put into consideration the individual freedom of man to act.

The question is: what actually constitutes an Igbo man’s freedom in terms of communal collaborative activities? Does it mean self-realization in the absence of coercion and restraint being imposed by the society in the nature of communalism, or the absence of obstacles to the satisfaction of one’s desire as expressed in the language of Russell and Hobbes⁴⁹, or to do as we ought? In other words, how do we associate it with a self-realization or mature existential perfection of one’s objective goal, in the language of Jean-Paul Sartre in his textbook, *Being and Nothingness*?⁵⁰ “Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is the freedom” (2 Cor 3:17). St. Augustine used the term liberty as opposed to free

48 V.C. Uchandu, *The Igbos of S.E. Nigeria*, London: Winston Publication, 1965, p. 34, in J.C. Ekei, *Communalism*, *Op. cit.*, p. 23.

49 Hobbes in *Leviathan*, Part 11, chapter. 21, p. 161, sees liberty as the absence of external impediments of motion which takes away part of man’s power to do what he wishes to do. While for Russel, freedom means the absence of the obstacles to the satisfaction of desire.

50 J. P. Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* in E.I. Njoku, “*The Essence And Structure of Human Freedom*”, an unpublished Thesis presented to the Spiritan School of philosophy, Isieniu-Nsukka, in partial fulfilment of Bachelor’s degree in Philosophy, June, 1980, p. 16.

choice to express that spiritual maturity that sets the soul free for the moral and the religious good.

Thus, freedom and determinism are not contradictory as to exclude each from the other but rather are complementary aspects of man's existence, in as much as this existence is a freedom incarnated and situated in the world⁵¹. While we are not out to treat freedom as a topic, we are trying to see how the role of an individual is felt in an Igbo system where communal collaborative life is given priority. Perhaps, in treating the spirit of individualism in relation to collaborative communal effort, the above questions will be taken care of.

Naturally, society often vacillates between individualism and collectivism. In some periods of our cultural history, the extremes are not evident, as the pendulum continues its swing in balancing the recognition of personalities in relation to societal communalism. The governing principle here, according to F.C. Ogbalu, is that "*if a man pretends to bury himself (alone), one of his hands will be exposed*"⁵². Among the Igbos, the reference to "individualism" at times waxed strong and is based on the communal consideration of the needs of the society, which the individual will try to be part of. This could be regarded as an effort to specialize in a field of which the individuals are known such as: education, politics, economy, and social or religious spheres, etc. The challenging nature of the society that calls for recognition, for identification and for progress spurs this spirit of individualism. Hence, under this spirit, the individual becomes aware of the movement that encourages self-effort to strive to success through communal activities. It has an undertone of healthy competitions among the age-mates or peers and different group associations who are philanthropically out to see to the progress of the community, while challenging themselves to progress in their different aspiration. We have people who are engaged in mini self-employment like: farming, trading, arts and co-operations etc, as individuals and

51 E.I. Njoku, (Cf. note 50) , p. 16.

52 F.C. Ogbalu, Op. cit., 1965. p. 8 quoted by C.B. Nze in his Book, Aspects of African Communalism, p. 2; Cf. F.C. Ekei, Op. cit., p. 77.

as groups respectively. Professor Pentaleon Iroegbu associated this spirit of Igbo life to governmental administration when he noted:

The existential expression of the two basic qualities of the Igbo - her community spirit and her individualism - is clearly seen in the political arrangement. It is one in which the person expresses his individuality, liberty and autonomy as well as his belonging to, and participation in the community. The individuals in the community come together to decide on how to govern the society and community decisions become binding. The Igbo have in general no monarchical authoritarian imposition of kings or chiefs⁵³.

The Igbo spirit of individualism, in effect, makes for communal progress, as it does not contradict the spirit of communal participation. Both aspects of life (individual and collective) are marked by solidarity-will, meaning that they act as one voice despite their diversity of minor cultural differences. Thus the reactions of individuals, both as members of a society and of nuclear family groups, are surely due to emphasis on the communalism that had characterized their cultural world view which is spelt out well in social and government participation being guided by the customary law of the people. The philosophy of life in this nature of practice is based on what promotes the common good through a collaborative effort by everyone.

3. Igbo traditional government in the context of traditional world-view

In our discussion of Igbo world-view above, we discovered that it is all-embracing as it involves the recognition of the Supreme Being, the creator of the universe, the higher and the lower deities, the ancestors and the living. The mutual relationship of all these, summarily regarded as the visible and invisible realities, give more meaning to the practice of communalism. Among the living, there exists the spirit of caring and the recognition of all members since what affects an individual person in the community affects all who are in solidarity-will with one another. When we come to the nature of the traditional system of government, it follows the same relationship. The nature of the government administration is, therefore, another way of demonstrating the spirit of cooperation or collaboration in the life of the Igbos. Their system of government is democratic as it accords each person the

53 P. Iroegbu, *Communalism: towards Justice in Africa*, Nigeria-Owerri: International Universities Press Ltd, 1996. p. 24

opportunity of self-expression and respect for individual gifts (charisms)⁵⁴. Moreover, there exists the spirit of collaboration among the groups who meet together to discuss issues before arriving at a unanimous decision. Mayer Fortes regards such a democratic situation as a *Segmentary Political System*. Segmentary in the sense that it is practised clan by clan. This system does not have a centralized or pyramidal, unified political organisation. This helps in the process of equilibrium especially in the characteristics of the social structure as a whole. Government authority is distributed among the corporate units with regard to naturally talented gifts to handle any communal position and a lot of co-operation is demanded here. The “relatively egalitarian Igbos”⁵⁵ lived in an organized group of *umunna* according to a lineage system that did not allow social stratification or an administrative spirit of hierarchical government.

The Igbo people strongly believe in the government of the community clan members and vehemently oppose any form of autocracy or dictatorship that lords it over others. They often express this in their daily life language: *Igbo amaghi Eze* (Igbos do not worship kings); *oha na-ekwu* (community decides); *oha ka* (community counts more than a person; unity is strength)⁵⁶. Reverend Eugene Onuoha in his article, “*Inculturation of Church Authority in Igboland*”, made this observation: “Constitutional monarchy was quite foreign to the Igbo tradition. The government is a direct rule by the people themselves”⁵⁷. In Igboland, leadership of one man or matters of hierarchical or aristocratic machination of administration are not accepted as they do not favour collaboration in the community. Where this is experienced like in some areas in Anambra, A.C. Nwosu rather attributed this to the influence of the colonial masters who created the “warrant chiefs” with the ordinance of 1916 to facilitate their governance where kingship institutions were not in practice⁵⁸. What counts in Igbo land is solidarity-will or the unanimous decision-making that involves all its members from whom talents are tapped and people are assigned to do things in areas

54 *Ibid.*, p. 5

55 *Ibid.*, p. 23

56 *Ibid.*, p. 23

57 E. Onuoha, “*Inculturation of Church Authority in Igboland*”, in A.N.O. Ekwunife et al. (eds.), *Renewal of Priestly Life and Ministry: The Nigerian Experience*. Nigeria: Snaap Press, 1995, p. 318.

58 V. Nwaosu, “*The Growth of Catholic Church in Onitsha Ecclesiastic Province*”, in A.O Makozi and G.J. Afolabi Ojo (eds.), *The History of the Catholic Church in Nigeria*, Lagos: Academy Press 1982.

they are gifted for the welfare of the community. For instance, in Achebe's novel, *Things Fall Apart*, Okonkwo was assigned to lead the youths of *Umuofia* in a civil war against their enemies because the community recognized his gift of leadership role. In this effect, he was able to carry out his responsibility successfully through his effective collaboration and collective cooperation with the youths as he applied his leadership skills, being blessed by the elders.

The gift of charisma is being respected when functions are distributed in the village among the "*umunna*" or tribe. Power or authority in Igboland is seen as "an instrument of service for the people and not for their domination. The leader in the family, village or town level is accountable both to the deities and to the people"⁵⁹. Igbo people prefer "constituted leadership but not imposed authority"⁶⁰. Following the communal need of the people, authority is exercised at different levels stretching from the nuclear family consisting of father, mother and children to an extended family system like the *umunna* clan: these are people of the same ancestral lineage.

Take for instance the collaborative clan settlement of cases, which will involve the elders of each family who will assemble in a common place to make peace by deliberating collectively on the existential issues. Such cases will be settled unanimously or democratically through the spirit of solidarity-will (*ummunna bu ike*) as opinions are sorted individually. This is to say that "government is a direct rule by the people themselves"⁶¹. Before cases are settled, the eldest man of the clan will convoke all the first sons of the families for a fruitful and collective deliberation. Assuming that the cases had been revealed before, the representatives of these families would endeavour to consult their entire members through the process of investigation and collection of more facts on the issues. When the cases are represented before the family representatives, people will be allowed to air their views, after which a group of men, normally hand-picked by the president or the eldest, will be requested to go out and put heads together by deliberating

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

⁶¹ E. Onuoha, *Op. cit.*, p. 318.

more deeply on the matter, decide on the issues and come back to present to the floor their unanimous decision or report. Normally, the participants in the *izu* (decision making) are “people of fibre prestige and endowed with enough wisdom to understand and appreciate all the intricacies and depths of the Igbo school of thought”⁶². When the *izu* members finally arrive at a conclusive decision after considering the *pros* and *cons* of the matters, they will select one of them who will act as a spokesman. The spokesman must be vested in the language, in the use of idioms, proverbs and figures of speech. He has to be “eloquent, an orator, and a man with persuasive acumen”⁶³ who will finally present what the *izu* members decided to the assembly. Whatever verdict they give on the issues will be what the eldest man of the clan will present to the floor as the solution for the matter(s) in the spirit of communalism.

The leadership here is trusted to the heads of families (*ndi isi opara*), kindred and associates. Normally, the oldest man of the clan or village is charged with the responsibility of leading and directing the affairs. He presides over internal cases that affect the members and is a living representative of the ancestors. This must not be carried out at the expense of others, but rather, in collaboration with the community through the spirit of representative government. He is the one who has the effective control and respect to lead the community. As the eldest in the family, he administers the affairs of a nuclear family. He is the one who has the “most effective control of an Igbo community and he holds the “*Ofo*” which is the symbol of truth. It is important to invest him with a ritual title so that his authority can be exercised fully, in both religious and civil spheres”⁶⁴ as may be necessary. In this family of “*umunna*”, nobody is considered in isolation and no action is performed without regard for the family group or the village where everybody’s respect is observed.

Here, Pentaleon Iroegbu (an Igbo theologian) noted that at the level of the extended family, the eldest male (*opara*) exercised political leadership by presiding over internal

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 319.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 139.

⁶⁴ P.M. Anene-Mmuo, *Op., cit.*, pp. 69-70.

cases that arise in the lineage as exemplified above. Yet he would perform in a highly communal sense where problems would be discussed together and decisions made in the spirit of collaboration⁶⁵. Patrick Marry has this observation to make here: The authority of the *opara* derives from his intermediary role between the group and the ancestors. Being the eldest male, he is the person closest to the ancestors. The symbol of his authority is the *Ofo* (staff) a tree branch which is the symbol of truth and peace⁶⁶. The success of the Igbo is not only realized through nuclear family solidarity will, but also through their dynamic group identity known as *ndi ebiri* (age-grade group). This group is made of peers who come together to form an association that will enable them to register their contribution for development in the society. We can also make reference to other association groups like *ndi ozo* (titled men,) *ndi eze ji* (yam producers titleholders) *ndi eze okonko* (secret initiation for affluence), *eze muo* (traditional priests), *otu mmanwu* (group of masquerade), and *umu ada* (indigenous married women, called daughters of the village), etc.

All these groups in their different levels collaborate by helping to maintain peace and tranquillity in the town and they are respected in relation to their group contributions towards the progress of the society with the help of the existing customary laws and principles that guides their actions and communal decisions. “The Igbo legislation takes into account the common good. In executive and judiciary power, the law of equity is very much applied foremost by the Igbos”⁶⁷.

4. Conclusion

The characteristic nature of the Igbo world-view as presented in this chapter helped to give us the picture of how the early people lived their lives anthropologically before the advent of Christianity and what characterize their lives as Igbos, culturally. Through this presentation, a lot is dedicated to the traditional life collaboration of the Igbo people before the influence of Christianity in regards to the nature of their administration and mutual interaction with the forces around them, including the use of religion and practice of

65 Cf. P. Iroegbu, *Op. cit.*, p. 24.

66 Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 25.

67 E. Onuoha, *Op. cit.*, p. 320.

communalism. In this nature of life, attention is focused on the mutual collaborative services of the members toward a common goal, which is the mark of justice for the people, and on subordination of the particular good or charisma of individuals or any group to that of the community.

Our approach here in handling the Igbo system of collaboration is not only an anthropological approach that has to do with the existential practice of the people, but is also a phenomenological exposition which highlights the life of communalism in relation to higher beings. This is because Igbo traditional religion is basically the way of life of African people that knit all other aspects together. As it involves God, Spirits, ancestors, traditional priests and the living, the model was more of interrelationship, understanding, respect, and affinity of love and concern that prevailed within the life forces. As the deities, ancestors and priests were regarded as intermediaries between God and the living beings, there was that tendency of dependence on the disincarnate beings, seeing God as the ultimate of them all.

Following the above, we have presented the essential characteristic nature of the Igbo system of communalism in its traditional set up, as our new ecclesial proposal will take the nature of the family of God working in collaboration. Our presentation here will help us to understand why we insist that our Church as practiced now lacks the people's way of living, hence the importance of inculturation. The aim here is to show how strong the spirit of communalism used to be within the culture of the Igbos. In the past, people learned who they were and what their place was in the eternal order of how things were to be, by looking at the progression of generations that stretched behind them, a progression that would extend from them into a future of which one could say only that it would probably be like the present. In the last analysis, Igbo people in traditional society were placidly able to face death in fighting for the spirit of communalism or solidarity-will. This is because they knew their names and memories would live on, through the lineage of their

families⁶⁸ which they regard as *ahamefuna*, (literally: my name will never be forgotten). This would forever immortalize generations of successive up-springs. The family was held firmly in the matrix of a larger social order, collaboration, respect and love. The structure that encased a family's life in Igbo land had the following characteristics as seen earlier: the number of people in the household has one set of ties bound to the surrounding kin, the network of aunts and uncles, cousins and nieces who belong to one ancestral generation. On a wider scale, it is fastened to the larger community of *umunna* (or clan) that could trace their lineage back to their forefathers or even to God, the Father of all. The term *clan* embraces distant kinds and close relatives from both sides of the family (of father and mother) including their relationships with one another, their births, and deaths ceremonies, festivals and marriages, etc., that helped to make them what they are: men and women of communal and collaborative life. "Many constellations of sentiments are, however, possible within any given structure and in the family nature of today that is in crisis of emotion of attachment and rejection"⁶⁹, due to western influence as observed.

What we have demonstrated in this chapter is that collaboration is ultimately communitarian in Igboland set up – socially, politically and religiously. This is because all relationship is tied to their religious belief that has God as the father of all, throughout their ancestral generations. Hence, in the way of God, the relationship with the ancestors is not a private venture but a sacred *umunna* life of corporate existence. The spirituality is a communal search of being in relationship with the divine beings and with each other as seen when quarrels are settled within the community. As such, all communal activities are done collaboratively within the historical community set up. In this aspect of life, attention is focused on the mutual service of the members towards a common goal and on the subordination of the particular good or charisma of individuals or any group to that of the community. What is manifested is a collaborative effort of the community of people who are individually free to organize and carry out their functions with a purpose of community development in view of their origin.

68 Cf. E. Shorter, *The making of the Modern Family*, London: William Collins Sons & Co Publication Ltd, 1976, p. 17.

69 *Ibid.*, p. 18.

Here too, we noticed that authority is necessary and possible but not the type that lords it over others and looks for glorification, but rather the type that is ready to sacrifice the best of what he has and listens to the voice of others for the common good. As Igbo traditional societies have always been democratic, “decisions which affect the life of all the clans constituting the village-group, normally involve consultation of family, kindred and clan heads. Orders, which come from the top without prior discussion or negotiation are ignored or questioned”⁷⁰. The philosophy of life as it existed in this pre-modern era was based on what promoted the common good, communal consideration of the needs of individuals and the society in general.

The high regard for God as presented in this chapter help to show how religiously committed the Igbos had been right from time immemorial. This spirit of religiosity among the Igbos facilitated their easy reception and acceptance of the early missionaries that evangelized them by 1885. Perhaps, the importance of our communal cultural collaboration will be made clearer when we have discussed the nature of the early missionary evangelization, which constitutes the next chapter.

70 E.E. Uzukwu, “*A Servant Church in a New African Nation: Leadership as a Service of Listening*”, in Bulletin of Ecumenical Theology, Nigeria: The Ecumenical Ass. Of Nigerian Theologians’ Publication, 6. 1, 1994, p. 5.

CHAPTER V

MISSIONARY CONSIDERATION: EARLY HISTORICAL EVANGELIZATION IN IGBOLAND

In chapter four, we tried to present the worldview of the Africans, particularly the life situation of the Igbos of Nigeria before the advent of Christianity. As our analysis has to do with the problems of inculturation and collaboration due to the existing model of ecclesiology in Igboland, we decided to review the nature of the early missionary evangelization for further reflection. The present chapter will examine the nature, strategies, and impact of this first evangelization in Igboland. This chapter will act as a transparent mirror through which we can see clearly the source of the problem of collaboration among the agents of evangelization in view of the cultural life of the Igbos which we have just treated. We shall handle this chapter under the following main sub-concerns: (1) conception of evangelization, (2) early missionary evangelization, (3) applied strategies, (4) presentation of God and the saints, (5) nature of religious administration, (6) comparative evaluation and (7) the conclusion.

1. The concept and process of evangelization

What is evangelization, an inquiring mind may ask? The term “evangelization” is so complex and rich in reality that carefulness has to be taken to avoid the risk of weakening or distorting its real meaning¹. Etymologically, the word “evangelist” is derived from the Latin word “*evangelista*,” which is the Greek noun equivalent of “*Evangelion*” meaning, broadly, the “Good News” and it can also be translated as the “Gospel” depending on the context. The Gospel writers are called “evangelists” in orthodox tradition, which means the announcers of the “Good News”. Therefore, “evangelist” is the title of an activity and not of an office. It is applied to the early Christian missionaries and proclaimers of the gospel message, the teachings of Christ. Any partial and fragmentary definition, which attempts to

1 Cf. Pope Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, No. 17.

delineate the term of evangelization in all its richness, complexity and dynamism, does so, according to Pope Paul VI, only “at the risk of impoverishing it”².

Evangelization is a very essential aspect of Christianity that has to do with the planting of the Gospel message among people of different cultures. Although, the precise meaning of this term has varied with different historical contexts; it is generally applied to the process of communicating the doctrine of salvation through faith in Christ. The message has to be lived out in people’s lives. In Saint Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians, he evoked the importance of evangelization in the following words: in fact, preaching the gospel message gives me nothing to boast of, for I am under compulsion and I should be in trouble if I fail to do it, (1Cor. 9:16). These words of Saint Paul help to demonstrate what it means to be committed in announcing the “Good news”. The synoptic writers are regarded as evangelizers in terms of proclaiming Christ not only to those who do not know him, but also to those who are yet to understand him within their culture and time. Suffice it to say that evangelization helps in the inner transformation of humanity and making it new through the Church that professes it. It is the conversion of “both the personal and collective consciences of people, the activities in which they engage, and the life and concrete milieu, which are theirs”³. It must be underscored that the ability to communicate, to proclaim the message of salvation, the message of Christ to all those who have not yet heard about him, is to evangelize.

The source and the end of evangelization is the “Trinity”. Thus, it draws humankind into the very life of the Trinity. It is “the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit” (2 Cor. 13:13), made visible in order to “make all things new (Rev. 21:5), and to lead humankind in the Spirit through the Son, back to the Father, so that God may be everything to everyone” (I Cor. 15:28)⁴.

² *Ibid.*, No. 11.

³ *Ibid.*, No. 301.

⁴ Quoted in the Instrumentum Laboris, (Synod of Bishops special Assembly for Africa), Vatican City 1993, p. 10.

The Church appreciates that evangelization means the carrying forth of the good news to every sector of the human race so that by its strength, it may enter into the hearts of men and renews the face of the earth⁵. This process of renewal or transformation begins with baptism which initiates Christians into the life of Christ lived out within the people's culture. Within our context, evangelization includes its source, content, bearer, recipient, what it is about that makes it good for the recipient, and so forth⁶. Christ, God made man, is the content of evangelization, while the missionaries are the bearers and the new evangelized cultures are the recipients of this Good News. For the aim of evangelization to be achieved, it needs to address the depth and the real core of life of the people within their cultural milieu. One of the essential elements of evangelization is its ability to permeate man's culture and cultures. Speaking on this issue, Pope Paul VI. has this to say:

The Gospel and therefore evangelization are certainly not identical with culture, and they are independent in regard to all cultures. Nevertheless, the kingdom, which the Gospel proclaims, is lived by men who are profoundly linked to a culture and the building up of the kingdom cannot avoid borrowing the elements of human culture or cultures. Though independent of cultures, the Gospel and evangelization are not necessarily incompatible with them; rather they are capable of permeating them all without becoming subject to any of them⁷.

This process of evangelization entails imparting the Gospel message through the use of the cultural values of the people. This is a process that operates in the nature of give and take: it enriches and is enriched by the culture it enters into dialogue with. Also in anticipation of his pastoral visit to Nigeria, Pope John Paul II expressed the hope that it would initiate "a new era of evangelization"⁸. It is meant to be a fresh impulse to transform individuals and society. And since "the path of culture is the path of man, the new era is suppose to ensure an effective evangelization of culture such that each person in Nigeria will hear again the marvellous deeds of God in his own language (cf. 2:11), and from within his own culture"⁹.

5 Cf. Pope Paul VI, *Op. cit.*, No. 18.

6 J. R. Moreno, "Evangelization" in *Mysterium Liberationis*, USA: New York, 1993, p. 564.

7 Pope Paul VI, *Op. cit.*, No. 20.

8 Pope John Paul II, "An address to the Bishops at Lagos", Nigeria-Lagos: Catholic secretariate press, p. 3.

9 J. Okoye, *A new Era of evangelization* in *Proceedings of the National Seminar on New Era of Evangelization*, Sponsored by the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria, Ibadan: Ss. Peter and Paul Seminary Press, May 3, 1984, p. 9.

However, we have two branches of evangelization: one is called the “propagation” of faith and the other, is the “propaganda” or the “nurturing” of faith. For Bishop Rossini, the former secretary of the Vatican secretariat, it is “proclamation and dialogue”; the purpose of the “proclamation” is to bring the faith, God’s message, to the people who have not yet heard of Jesus Christ. It does this through preaching, catechizing and conferring of baptism and other sacraments – the phase of propagation. In other-words, it is called first evangelization, which calls for the planting of seed (the Gospel message), leaving it for Apollos to water, and for God to give the growth (I Cor. 3:6). The nature with which this first phase is applied determines how the second phase will work out in practice.

Dialogue or the nurturing of faith, which also should be regarded as the propaganda, is the dynamic caring and watering of the seed to help it grow to maturity which consists, according to Shorter, of “a long and thorough hermeneutical effort to enter into the ‘horizon of meaning’ of deepening other traditional religions and cultures that embrace the message of salvation,¹⁰. Vatican II describes it as a deepening of a “living exchange between the Gospel message and the diverse cultures of the people”¹¹. Nurturing here calls for spreading of the Good News, renewal of the soul that demands self-commitment and deeper inculturation. This propagation of faith is continued in the pastoral activity among the faithful as the faith grows and matures within a culture. Therefore, the whole of the Church’s activity and being is called evangelization, which comprises of elements that are complementary and mutually enriching.

For deeper understanding of evangelization, one has to articulate all its essential elements which are transmitted to us by the Vatican II Council, especially, in *Lumen Gentium*, *Gaudium ET Spes* and *Ad Gentes*. These documents spell out the need for the renewal of humanity – bringing “Good News” into all the strata of the society and, through its influence, transforming humanity from within. The news of Jesus Christ – the Gospel message, proclaimed through the two fundamental commands: “put on the new self” and “be reconciled to God”, is meant to be propagated by the Church as its primary aim through

10 Cf. A. Shorter, *Towards a Theology of Inculturation* New York: Orbis Books, 1992.

11 Vatican II, GS., No. 44.

the cultural life of the people. The spirit of transformation of humanity is a challenge to all the agents of evangelization, which can only be communally worked out through collaboration, sharing of activities as loving children of God.

This process of effective collaboration is important because in evangelization, the destiny and well-being of humanity is at stake. Humanity cannot claim to have achieved its purpose until “the Gospel has upset and converted those mankind’s criteria of judgement, determining values, points of interests, lines of thought, sources of inspiration and models of life which are in contrast with the world of God and the plan of salvation”¹². “Generally, evangelization brings primarily Christ, then the Gospel/Good News, the reign of God/Christ, faith operative in love, salvation”¹³.

The content of evangelization is the witness of the good news of Christ (cf. Mk. 1:1) that requires all the people of God to participate. It is important to note that before being the Christ who is proclaimed, he is the Jesus who evangelizes. *Evangelii Nuntiandi* throws more light on the aspect of Jesus Christ as “the first and greatest evangelizer”¹⁴. This leads to a better understanding of evangelization from its historical perspective, the embodiment of whom is Jesus Christ, the news bearer of God’s kingdom, which is the source of the Gospel message. It is by looking at Jesus, the model of evangelization that the Church learns to evangelize by sending out missionaries to continue this work of salvation as inherited through the apostles, the early evangelists, and to carry it out as a communion.

2. Early missionary evangelization

Having presented the meaning of evangelization and its teachings in relation to the revelation of God’s salvific purpose on earth, we shall present the early missionaries and how they settled in Igboland and the reason for this.

12 Pope Paul VI, *Op. cit.*, No. 19.

13 James Okoye, *Op. cit.*, p. 3.

14 Cf. C. Obi, *A hundred Years of the Catholic Church in Eastern Nigeria, 1885-1985*, Nigeria-Lagos: Academic Press, 1985, p. 35.

On September 29th, 1885, a missionary group of the Holy Ghost Congregation arrived and settled at Onitsha for the propagation of faith as handed down by Christ for the continuation of evangelization. This group was led by Reverend Father Lutz, who approached and got a piece of land from “Obi Anazonwu of Onitsha, who received them with warmth and cordiality”¹⁵ to build a mission house. Other members of the group included Reverend Father Horn, and two other Reverend Brothers, John and Herman. As these devoted missionaries settled down to work, they were able to distinguish their method of propagation from their SMA (Protestant) counterparts who had already settled before them.

It is on record that many attempts were made earlier by the Portuguese Jesuits to extend their missionary domain from Dahomey (present Republic of Benin) and Sierra Leone to Nigeria, but without success as they wanted a mass conversion by first converting the Oba of Benin. On December 29, 1885, the Holy Ghost missionaries re-united at Onitsha and made their decision to concentrate there instead of proceeding to Lokoja. Onitsha, located on Igboland, the Southern part of Nigeria, became their permanent base of operation. As Onitsha had a teeming population estimated at between 10,000 and 25,000, the missionaries felt that it was a worthy starting point for missionary activity¹⁶. Another reason for the choice of their settlement at Onitsha was the discovery of a large population of people who had not been influenced by Islam and that communication with Europe was easily available, while the climate seemed healthier here than at Igbede (Lokoja)¹⁷. Onitsha was also seen as an easy way for the importation and access of foodstuffs from abroad, their home country and from within the town itself as Father Lutz noticed: “there is a big market by the river, which sits everyday”¹⁸. Onitsha then became the headquarters for these missionaries from which they moved in to other parts of the region.

The missionaries, no doubt, tried their best to spread the Good News to every nook and cranny of the Igbo territory. Today, it is on record that almost 90% of the inhabitants

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

¹⁸ Letter by Father Lutz, published in *Annales Apostoliques* (1886), No.3, p. 3, quoted in C. Obi, *Op. cit.*, p. 13.

are Christians, but still, a good percentage of this population is still compartmentalized in their belief system. It is important to look at the employed strategies that were applied by the early missionaries.

3. Missionary applied strategies

Although the missionaries faced extraordinary difficulties, they did not take long before registering their presence in Igboland. Through their methodology, they made an impact in the life of the people, at least, by having numerous people who preferred them to the Protestants. These strategies include organisation of “Christian communities”, charitable work of caring for the sick and the destitute, given alms to the natives who approached them for help, helping in the liberation of the slaves and establishment of schools. We shall consider these points one after the other to enable us see clearly, why today, the whole of Igboland is given the first phase of evangelization.

3.1 Christian communities: Western oriented culture

Having been received by the chief as previously mentioned, the missionaries tried to settle down by not only constructing houses for their habitation as the chief of the land had in mind by giving them land, but they extended their frontier by establishing basic Christian communities called “Christian Villages”. The establishment of these communities whereby the new converts were brought up in a different environment outside their normal cultural homes alienated the converts from their original culture. But for the missionaries, this process helped them to make more converts and to train them in their own cultural way. We can recall from our earlier chapters that the Igbos operated conveniently under the spirit of *umunna*, communalism. In an effort to emulate this system, but divorced of cultural influence of the natives, the missionaries were able to make an impact in their evangelization of the Igbos through the establishment of community life in a totally different orientation, being influenced by western culture instead. The fundamental idea behind this mentality was the notion that the cultural life of the people was paganish

and to rid the new converts of this background, there was need to bring them up from a different environment.

Even at the initial stage, it was very difficult for the missionaries to make more converts. The early converts of evangelization in Igboland of Nigeria were mainly the slaves, the outcasts, (called the “*Osu*”), the poor, the disabled and the marginalized within the society. The early missionaries used the opportunity of slave liberation and the outcasts (*Osu*) to gain more members as they involved themselves in the buying of slaves and giving liberated freedom to the outcasts. The outcasts and the underprivileged in the society were given a new Christian orientation of life by the missionaries. They gradually imbibe the European way of life and religion, thus, becoming promoters of the new religion who were used to evangelize in the hinder lands. “By 1900, there were as many as three “*Christian communities*”: Onitsha, Aguleri, and Nsugbe”¹⁹. Eventually, these turned out to be among the early Christian converts that were trained through this system of newly established Christian communities as reverend Obi, the centenary historian reported:

The buying back of slaves led to the opening of the Christian village –“a temporary compromise between Europe and Africa”, where the inmates lived a very strictly regulated life with definite hours for prayers, play and work. The missionaries considered it a most favourable circumstance where the Catholic doctrine could be imparted to the catechumens away from the neutralizing influences of non-Christian neighbours, protestants and some merchants/civil servants who, he (Lutz), said, lived in total disregard of all moral laws. It was a community where freed slaves practised a kind of quasi-monastic spirituality, a fact which some historians totally ignored but rather interpreted as a device for obtaining “useful pools of cheap labour before the emergence of a free labour market”²⁰.

These early converts were given the European system of education in contrast to their cultural traditional way of life. The popular language was that they were given a “modern training” for their being civilized. Modern in the sense that all that came from Europe were being regarded as superior in comparison with the local values. Converts were expected to abandon everything that was connected with their old lives prior to the advent of Christianity. This indoctrination was further reinforced through education of the converts

19 In C. Obi, *Ibid.*, p. 35.

20 *Ibid.*, p. 35.

and their children (as we shall see later) with the result that they viewed their culture as undesirable and anti-Christian; as a superstition, which should not only be discouraged but also destroyed completely. Hence, these converts were catalysed to wage a crusade war against the traditional priests and the shrines and temples made for the ancestors and minor deities. As a strategy, the enlightened ones were brain washed on matters of their culture to the extent that they were prepared and used as instruments for these destructions, being compensated with the offer of gifts and minimal employment opportunities. Commenting on this, the late archbishop Stephen Ezeanya says: “conflict exists often because of lack of adequate knowledge on the part of the Christians who came in contact with the traditional religion. Some came with the 19th century mentality and prejudice with which the traditional culture, especially religion, was attacked by those who saw it a bouncing child of the devil in Africa. Most of them did not take time to understand the people’s culture”²¹. Thus, he tries to explain the traditional practices of the Igbos as at that time:

Contained also in our traditional cultural heritage is the respect for the dignity of man at whatever stage in his life. It is true there have been mistakes made by our ancestors about an individual’s inviolable right to his life and property. But most of these mistakes were not made out of malice. Rather, they were in response to felt obligations to perform certain ceremonial rites to appease, for instance, an angry deity so that the whole town or family might not perish²².

The issue was that the missionaries could not study well the traditional practices of the people to enable them maintain a fair judgement on Igbo culture, instead of seeing everything as superstition or idolatry. Take for instance, “among the Biron people of Northern Nigeria, the word for God was *Dagwi*. It literally means the Father of the Sun. The early missionaries concluded that the Biron people were Sun worshippers. Nothing was further from the truth”²³. But reverend Professor Okoro rather sees it as a reversal of values, which goes with religious life transition. The new convert, in abandonment of traditional religion for the new faith in Christ, means in practice, a complete reversal of cultural/religious values such as universal love as opposed to clan or particular love for particular people. It

21 S. Ezeanya, *The Church Speaks to Africa*, Nigeria-Enugu: Diocesan Secretariat Publication, 1976, p. 12.

22 Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 12.

23 D. Brosnan, “*Towards an African Christology*”, in *Incarnating Christ Today: Reflections from the Great Jubilee year*, edited by The Department of Systematic Theology, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2000.

also represents the virtues of poverty, simplicity, humility or lowliness, the leader being the servant of all, ideas unknown or very little known to natural man in his natural religion, love of suffering, pain and even death itself. Or perhaps, Christianity is seen also as other-centred, definitely God-centred as opposed to the presupposed notion to the anthropo-centred sort of religion²⁴. The missionaries see African religion as anthropo-centred. This too means in practice, according to Okoro, a reversal of value. Generally, it means that in all, an Igbo convert had to undergo a thorough cultural change in his encounter with Christianity²⁵. Looking at Christianity in relation to traditional cultures, Pope Pius XII did not instruct total annihilation of the latter, he rather suggested, as it were, an application of inculturation. In his teaching, he states as follows:

...let not the Gospel on being introduced into any new land destroy or extinguish whatever its people possess that is naturally good, just or beautiful...whatever is not inseparably bound up with superstition and error will always receive kindly consideration and, when possible, will be preserved intact²⁶.

The idea here is that Christianity, as it were, is meant to give these accepted “natural cultural values” high ethical justification and motive. Hence, Pope Pius XII encouraged a good use of cultural values for the enrichment of the Gospel message. But, as we saw earlier, ancestors are not worshipped but revered and they are foundational to the lives of the people. Moreover, with Christian influence, education and development have become the order of the day, and as a result many of the above practices have become extinct among the lives of the Africans, particularly, the Igbos, but the respect of the ancestors still persist among the Africans.

Perhaps, the missionaries saw actions against the cultural values of the people as a favour; but they forgot that those they trained would eventually have to work with the people in the village later. They thought that such a strategy could help them to gradually turn the whole nation to Christianity, being converted according to their life-style. Also, they never had the mind that they would one day leave the country.

24 B. Okoro., *Op. cit.*, pp. 44-45.

25 Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 44-45.

26 Pope Pius XII - On Promoting Catholic Mission, Rome: Vatican Publication, 1951 No. 56.

The sick children that were received by the missionaries were treated on condition that such children on recovery would be allowed to stay in the mission for some years²⁷. Parents, recognizing the importance of life and the fact that the white man had the real medicine since the commonest diseases were dysentery and malaria, and realizing that they had no other alternative, allowed their children to stay in the mission communities as dictated by the missionaries. Nevertheless, the early missionary's evangelization owed its numerical strength success not so much to the Christian villages which were later abandoned, but also to the programme for the transformation of the society whose aim was to attract the village people toward them for massive conversion. However, the programme apparently was to help the people to get aids for living²⁸. Besides the establishment of "Christian Communities", the missionaries were deeply involved in the work of human promotion through education, schools, hospital apostolate and social work²⁹.

3.2 Use of education

When the means of communication became almost impossible due to language barrier and cultural differences, having constructed "Christian Communities", the missionaries adopted the school "system as its chief strategy of evangelizing the people of Eastern Nigeria"³⁰. With the introduction of basic education, the missionaries were able to permeate the local people to some extent by offering jobs to the ones that followed them who eventually succeeded in reading and writing. The realization of this primary objective was to win the people's acceptance of themselves and of Roman Catholicism in an area where the Church Missionary Society had been actively established since 1857³¹. Confirming the use of "mission communities and school establishment", Father Lutz stated:

27 Ref. to C. Obi, *Op. cit.*, p. 30.

28 *Ibid.*, p. 30.

29 D. Akpunonu, "Neo- colonialism and the Mission of the Church in Nigeria", in Joseph Brookman-Amissah, J.E. Anyanwu et al. (eds.) Inculturation and The Mission Week of CIWA, Nigeria-Port Harcourt: CIWA Press, 1992, p. 45.

30 K.B.C. Onwubiko, 'The Catholic Church and the development of Education in Eastern Nigeria 1885-1985', in C. Obi (ed.) *Op. cit.*, p. 224 .

31 *Ibid.*, p. 226.

Shortly after our arrival, we began a school, it had forty children together. Twenty of these are the children whom we redeemed from slavery and most of whom are saved from death. We should be able to increase this number, but alas! We are forced to restrict it to this due to lack of accommodation and especially due to lack of resources³².

In this area of education, these early Spiritan missionaries were able to open primary schools, nursery and maternity centres, catechetic centres and trade schools. They also set up a “leprosarium, dispensaries, hospitals and workshops to cater for the total well-being of all”³³.

A mixed school was also opened in 1886 at Onitsha by Father Lutz, who started with a population of 75 pupils made up of boys and girls³⁴. This helped in the education of women who were highly involved in handcrafts such as sewing, knitting, embroidery, and other domestic works. He invited the Sisters of the congregation of St. Joseph of Cluny (Rev. Mother Clotilda, the Superior, Rev. Sisters Mary Claver, Thierry and Charles), who arrived in Onitsha with Fr. Lecuyer who was returning from France to the Prefecture after ten months absence on sick leave³⁵. The above notwithstanding, with the arrival of the Sisters, the native women were taught how to read and write. The girls were thus given the basic education, which prepared them to play their proper roles as future home-keepers and leaders in the various fields of arts, education, science and technology in their society³⁶. With the arrival of Bishop Shanahan, girls’ school was separated from that of boys and different women congregations like the Holy Rosary Sisters, inaugurated in 1924 at Killeshandra, Ireland, were invited to take up this aspect of missionary activities as Onwubiko remarked:

Soon the Holy Rosary Sisters spread throughout the Onitsha and Owerri Provinces opening convent schools. In the Owerri area for instance, six Holy Rosary Sisters (Sr. Mary Agnes the Superior, Sisters Mary Cleman, Kelvin, Columba, Joseph and Gertride) opened a convent school in Emekuku in 1930. From here they spread to Ogbo Nguru and

32 Bulletin de la Congregation, XIV, No. 13, February 1888, quoted by B.C Onwubiko, *Ibid.*, p. 442.

33 Reported by Father Horne quoted in C. Obi (ed.), *Op. cit.*, p. 29.

34 Onwubiko, *Op. cit.*, p. 234.

35 *Ibid.*, p. 234.

36 *Ibid.*, p. 234.

Oru Ahiara in Mbaise. By 1954, 150 girls' schools with a population of 22,000 girls were recorded for Onitsha and Owerri Provinces³⁷

Through this system, the missionaries helped to elevate the special status and recognition of womanhood in Igboland by teaching the beauty of virginity. The opening of schools helped the early missionaries a lot in the process of evangelization as the pupils were taught English and Mathematics and other relevant subjects that helped to give them a basic education. With this system, the school population gradually developed. These missionaries really presented themselves as apostles of Christ, maintaining their virtue and upright living in their principles of life, and in turn, inculcated this into the local people. With this spirit, the natives were disposed towards them, as many villages invited them to come and set up mission apostolate in their communities, mainly for humanitarian purposes³⁸.

3.3 Presentation of gifts

With the opening of schools and hospitals, the Igbo natives were attracted to the white men who presented themselves as ambassadors of God. Added to education and health care, is the presentation of gifts as a strategy utilized by these early pioneer Catholic Spiritans to their advantage. This technique really worked as a good number of the local people were trooping to the mission premises for either medical care or other material help. As a mark of appreciation for such a kind gesture, the Chief of Obosi addressed Father Lutz in the following words on behalf of the people: White man, I salute you. God is with you, man of *oyibo* country. Providence has brought you to this country to render us assistance...I salute you white man. For diseases, you give us a box of medicine, which we know nothing of³⁹.

These early missionaries made their presence felt among the people they came in contact with, their community villages notwithstanding. Suffice it to say that their presence must have provided the people with an alternative, which their protestant counterparts had no choice but to accept, as well as satisfying the people's propensity for

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 235.

³⁸ C. Obi, *Op. cit.*, p. 30.

³⁹ Ekechi, *Op. cit.*, p. 236.

competition⁴⁰. A good example of this humanitarian work of mercy by the missionaries could be seen in the Obosi case in 1890. When the war broke out between the Royal Niger Company and the people of Obosi in that year, the missionaries supported the latter by not only providing them with material help (food stuff), but also treated their wounds and adopted the children of those killed in the war. As Celestine Obi, an Igbo historian observes, similar cases occurred in several other places and the natural result was a mass movement of communities to embrace Catholicism⁴¹.

With the corporal work of mercy as a belt to attract the people toward their message, the early missionaries were able to gain more converts as freed men and women, slaves, adults, children and even the chiefs, were responding greatly to their teachings, but not all that with commitment to the faith. Even the non-Catholics were being converted from other denominations as people were compared to choose between Churches and missionaries. Conversion from the Anglican to the Catholic Church was a common phenomenon. They really won the heart of the people who saw them as a different kind of white men,⁴² who aided them economically and health-wise too. What was central in the teaching of the early missionaries and why were they successful in this perspective? In other words, what was their notion of God? Was their notion of God different from the Igbo conception of the Supreme Being?

4. Conception of God and saints

The missionaries were preoccupied in the evangelization of the “pagan people” who, in their view, had no knowledge of the true God. Hence, they set out presenting to the people, the essential things that characterize the being of God, the Creator of the universe and His relationship with humanity. This is followed with the presentations of the saints whom the missionaries advised the new converts to follow their model of lives.

40 *Ibid.*, p. 75.

41 C. Obi, *Op. cit.*, p. 237.

42 V. Nwosu, *Op. cit.*, p. 40.

4.1 God, the Supreme and Creator of the universe

God is presented as the only Supreme Being, the only God of the universe who created all the existing things. He is also the final end of every human being since in Him alone all find unending happiness⁴³. God is presented as the creator of the universe who is eminently present among and with the people who believe in Him through His revelation and the work of the Holy Spirit. Anthropologically as well as theologically, God is Himself the subject of revelation. By His revelation, the Supreme Being from the fullness of His love, addresses men as His own people and moves with them. He is not simply the numinous depth cause (*Tiefengrunda*), but a guarantor and transfigurator of the existing real time. He shows Himself rather as God of the guidance; He shows Himself in ever indeducible new situations of the way of life, He chooses freely, He calls, He puts things into movement, He promises and effects in a surprising new way⁴⁴. People were therefore called to reciprocate this loving gesture of the Father through faith. By faith, man completely submits his whole being to the loving father as he assents to God, the revealer through Christ the son. The presentation is okay, but what the missionaries fail to realize is that all religions know about this mysterious divine deep dimension of reality⁴⁵.

Faith is therefore presented to the new converts following Scriptural teaching as an attitude in which man opens himself up to the challenging call of God and lets himself be guided by that call. This means obedience and unalloyed commitment to one true God. It also requires being faithful in listening and in appropriating the word of God in everyday life (Rm. 1:5). The whole life being fashioned from this unconditional *faith-commitment* proves to be the all-encompassing defining quality of an entire personality in God through Christ.

Following the Igbo word-view system as revealed in the last chapter, the converts were called to “*metanoia*”, a complete conversion of the total person, focussing on the one

43 Card. F. Arinze, “*The Role of the Catholic University in the Promotion of interreligious Dialogue*”, - a lecture delivered at the University of Leuven, 3rd November 1998, p. 8.

44 *Ibid.*, p. 8.

45 Cf. B. P. Amu, Religion And Religious Experience in Igbo Culture And Christian Faith Experience, Germany: Borengässer-Bonn, 1998, p. 238.

true God with confidence and love. This calls for man's willingness to listen to the new teaching, the call of God, and follow it in obedience and conviction, doing away with "*traditional deities*".

To believe in God means to believe in the Son, God made man. Christ is then, the concretization of the Father's love to humanity. He is the one mediator between God and man, the one and the only saviour of all humanity. "For there is only one God and there is only one mediator between God and mankind, himself a man, Christ Jesus, who sacrificed himself as a ransom for many" (Cf. 1 Tim. 2:5-6). This is tantamount to believing in the Holy Spirit, who reveals Christ and his earthly activities to men as taught in the bible.

The word of God is presented to the converts as the most important means of God's revelation. The locution about God is revealed in the context of theological interpretation of revelation. The word of God is to be used as a Christian *Theologoumenon*, as it were a short form for the biblical attested self-revelation of God in the word⁴⁶. People were invited to accept the Sacred Scripture as the word of God, which not only purifies but also animates and renews the hearts of the faithful.

The insistence was on the salvation of all mankind. Preferential commitment to the poor was proclaimed to the people as the heart of God's revelation and of Jesus preaching and concern. The reign of God was presented as a gift to those who believed and it made demands on those who received it in the spirit of children and in community. The members of this kingdom were therefore meant to live and to work together as brothers and sisters in Christ, and to be worthy of being called the children of God. Suffice it to say that God was presented to the new converts as "Emmanuel," God is with us, as He continues His ruling power on earth.

Relating the Christian God to Igbo traditional God, we must call to mind the fact that the Igbo man's greatest and highest object of belief is the existence of a Supreme Being. Cardinal Arinze notes: "The Igbo man believes firmly in the existence of the Supreme

46 Cf. K Kertelge, "*Wort Gottes*", pp. 296-307 quoted by B. P. Amu, *Ibid.*, p. 239.

Being. This Supreme Spirit has three chief names: *Chukwu* (Chi-ukwu, The Great Spirit), *Chineke* (the Spirit that creates, and *Osebuluwa* (Lord who upholds the world)⁴⁷. From our discussion on Igbo characteristics of communalism above, we noticed that all prayers are addressed to Chukwu, the Supreme Being. In situations where prayers are channelled through the minor dieties, it is because they are regarded as mediators or intermediaries between Chukwu (the Supreme Being) and man. “It is generally and theologically provable that the divinities have no absolute existence”⁴⁸. For Idowu, the African deities are being only in consequence of the being of Supreme Deity, God. This is because the divinities derive from Deity (Supreme Being) their powers and their authorities are meaningless apart from God⁴⁹. The Omniscient Being, Chukwu is the same as the Christian God. He is the one and the creator of the universe. He is present in every creature through his manifestation (Chi). We can then understand why Igbos responded favourably to the teaching of one true unique God by the Christians. It was also clear that the traditional religion of the people has prepared the ground for Christianity and its teachings including the communion with the saints in heaven.

4.2 Communion with the saints

In the process of the early missionary evangelization in Igboland, Christ was presented as God-incarnate, Emmanuel, through whom the Father reveals his salvific intention to humanity. All who are saved, whether they are Christians, Jews, Muslims or others, are saved through the grace of Christ, even when they do not expressly know this or consciously accept Christ as their Saviour.⁵⁰ They went further to present the life and communion with the saints in replacement to the communion of the ancestors whose historical lives were not yet recognized in the Church in the nature of canonization. Moreover, they were taught to believe that reverence to ancestors was tantamount to worshipping idols, and as such, a committed sin of idolatry that leads one to hell. It would

47 Cardinal F. Arinze, *Sacrifice in Igbo Religion*, Nigeria, University Press, 1970, p. 9 in Chukwudum B. Okoro (ed.), *The Igbo Church and Quest for God*, Nigeria: Pacific Press, 1985, p. 35.

48 B. Idowu, *African Traditional Religion – A definition* 2nd Printing, New York: Orbis Books, 1975, p. 148 in Chukwudum, *Ibid.*, p. 35.

49 *Ibid.*, p. 35.

50 Card. F. Arinze., *Op. cit.*, p. 35.

be better for the new converts to concentrate their adoration to the saints whose life-styles on earth stood as model for the living. The saints were human beings who lived out the doctrinal purity, lives of heroic virtue and some manifestations of miraculous intercession after death.

In the history of the Church, Pope Urban VII emphasized the notion of “doctrinal purity” in the early seventeenth century as against heretics or heterodox thinkers. None of the people of this sort was ever admitted into the community of saints, a possibility repugnant in itself as well as in its potential embarrassment to the Church that claims the infallible guidance of the Holy Spirit⁵¹. The second quality as designated to a saint, a heroic life, reflects and corresponds with unconditional response to the invitation of God, in such a way that he has lived a life of ever-increasing perfection in union and conformity with Christ, through “heroic exercise of charity and the other Christian virtues⁵². The virtues reflect the three theological virtues of faith, hope and charity and the four cardinal virtues of prudence, temperance, justice and fortitude. Together, all these attributes embrace all the requirements of a good Christian life⁵³ the converts should live in order to go to heaven.

The third quality, the miraculous intercession, demonstrates the fact that “the servant of God” now sat in heaven among the community of other saints and is able to intercede with Christ, in a quest to answer the prayers of the people on earth. Miracles, as needed here, refer more to the intercession after death than before it. Following the teaching of the Church, it is the *sine qua non* for canonization of saints. The saints were presented to the faithful in the sense that after Christ and the Blessed Virgin Mary, they are the only ones who are able to intercede on behalf of the living, after they have departed this life. To think about the intercession of the ancestors is a deception and act of ignorance that portrays their paganistic tendencies.

51 D. Weinstein and M. R. M. Bell, Saints and Society Christendom, 1000-1700, London: Chicago Press, 1926, p. 141.

52 P. Molinari, S.J., Saints, Their Place In The Church, New York: Sheed and Word 1965, p. 141.

53 Cf. Donald, *Op. cit.*

5. Nature of religious administration

Power generates community, community generates authority⁵⁴ and authority is expressed and realized in the administration. The normal power in the Christian doctrine is to be expressed through the presentation of God's kingdom, love, celebration, justice and community services, etc. that normally draw Catholics mutually together. When this process and values were preserved and institutionalized, they eventually became points of reference for future, like the "Christian communities". However, the fundamental set up, which aimed at organizing and governing that gave rise to the nature administration in Igboland, remains a point of reference for historical purposes. Commenting on this, professor Okoro contends:

Other indices of colonial practice, mentality, and structure in the Igbo Church included emphasis on the Church as a hierarchical pyramid comprising the Pope, Cardinals, Bishops, Priests, Brothers, Sisters, and lay people. The key actor, the Rev. Father, was almost everywhere a white man. There was a wall between the clergy and laity – a wall created not only by bureaucratic centralism but also by language and colour barriers...⁵⁵.

The achievement of the early missionaries could have been difficult, if not with their highhanded administration prowess they employed that helped them to subdue their subjects. The lay people were thought inefficient due to perhaps, limited knowledge of education acquired, as to be involved in internal serious administrative ventures. Suffice it to say that high positions of governance were being controlled by the white missionaries. The people were more of instruments/agents for the realization of the projects as mere workers or employees. Professor Okoro did not mince words when he made the following observation:

Church authority was entirely vested on the clergy. This authority gave rulings practically on every aspect of ecclesiastical life. Acceptance without question was in fact the very sign and proof of a "good Catholic", to have no initiative, to make no decision and simply to ask: "what does the Church say?" There was a great dichotomy between the clergy and the laity. Not only did the clergy dictate in matters of faith, moral and liturgy

54 J. Whitehead and E. Eaton, The emerging Laity – returning leadership to the community of faith. London: Doubleday, 1988, p. 50.

55 B. Okoro (ed), The Igbo Church and Quest For God, Nigeria: Pacific College Press, Obosi, 1985, p. 7.

but also in matters connected with administration, discipline, finance and church development⁵⁶.

With the establishment of schools, the early missionaries were able to train candidates who were being employed to teach in missionary Institutions, following their dictates as they were fully in control. The appointed station teachers were chosen among the most intelligent class. Moreover, advantage was given to those who were found fluent in English language for easy interpretation during sessions and normal consultations in a parish. There was no special formation for the catechists in those days, hence the appointed station teachers served multi-purposes: they taught the pupils how to read and write and most important of all, they taught religious knowledge as a compulsory subject of the school curriculum, conducted catechism classes for adults in the early hours of the mornings and conducted Church services in their stations on Sundays as the celebration of Sunday⁵⁷. A full time catechist was meant to live close to the mission where he was accessible to the priest. He visited and conducted services in outstations and prepared these stations ahead of time before the arrival of a priest in charge.

School teachers and village catechists had to be paid (the salary was at lower level)⁵⁸. V.A. Nwosu, writing on the early missionary activities in Igboland, has this to say in terms of poor salary of the teachers, which could be perhaps due to the limited income of the missionaries:

The case of salaries of catechumen-class teachers also came before the ADCU (Awka district Catholic union). These were teachers (usually untrained) who were employed by the parish or the local Church Committee to teach children, generally of pre-school age, and in schools commonly called *Ulo Akwukwo Ota-Akara*: "For a long time, this group of teachers was subjected to poor and uneven salary), which were in many cases paid at irregular times⁵⁹.

The situation was even worse where local communities were responsible for the payment of salaries to the catechists working in their zones. It was reported that delay in the

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁵⁷ R A. Njoku, *Op. cit.*, p. 190.

⁵⁸ D. L. Edwards, *Op. cit.*, p. 181.

⁵⁹ V.A. Nwosu, *Op. cit.*, p. 71.

payment of a teacher's salary often forced the teacher to live on loan credit. This means that he would borrow money from some friends within the community to be repaid when eventually, he received his pay. Nwosu cited a case of one Dominic Ezeibe – a teacher at Ifite-Ogwari in Aguleri Parish, who, on one occasion, was owed for eight months. When finally he got his salary, he was said to have been left with only five shillings, after repaying his creditors⁶⁰.

The state government take-over of all schools, including mission schools, after the Nigerian-Biafra war, in 1970, created a relief on the Catholic lay teachers. Realizing the poor and less rewarding conditions they were receiving, majority of the teachers affected were happy that their conditions of service would be a bit better. Indeed, their condition of living became improved as they were better paid and were free to decide on whether to continue with mission catechisms or not in addition to their teaching profession. The edict automatically made all former Catholic teachers no longer mission employees, but the State's⁶¹. As a result, they escaped what they regarded as an “unjust administrative structure” of the time. But all these (the nature of mission teaching and the intervention of the State government) had their consequences in the structural lives of the people.

These new systems of mission and administration affected a lot on the moral upbringing of the kids and the family structure of the people. As religion was no longer taught as it used to be during the time the missionaries were managing schools, the consequence was juvenile delinquency among the youths whose lives gradually changed. Also, the nature of families gradually took new dimension. Extended family system became questionable as people were taught to concentrate on the nucleus family of father, mother and limited kids. Instead of thinking about polygamous families, the issue is the have one man, one wife. However, culture can be suppressed, but it never dies.

Suffice it to say that today, people care less about the whole communal life that constitute legitimacy in every extended family system, thereby, losing interest in the

60 V. A. Nwosu, *Op. cit.*, p. 119.

61 *Ibid.*, p. 36.

family lineage in the collaborative communal system. The chain of generation serves no longer and moral authority of parents over their children gradually collapses. Other agencies now socialize and control the young as the continuity between the generations' falls. Shorter argued that no outside institutions at all can intrude upon the intimacy of the couple, and men and women come together to wrench apart as *freight cars* do in a switching yard. And for him, all these are seen as the crisis of the post-modern family⁶².

6. Reflective evaluation

In our discussion of this chapter, we have been able to focus our attention on the nature of the ministry of the early missionaries, their strategies and the reasons for their missionary success by planting the faith. We also discovered that the extent of the success of these early missionaries was recorded to some degree, due to the active role of the then laity whose contribution was on individual basis coupled with their employed strategies. One could say however, that “without the role of the laity, the Church could hardly have ever been founded in our land”⁶³, as they were used all the time, and moreover, they constituted the majority of the community of the faithful. These were mainly teachers of catechism; and in mission schools, father's boys were called “mass-servants”. These kids were not only helping as altar servers but were also serving in the father's house. They were involved in such works like compound cleaning in the Christian communities, stewardship and gardeners. Mention also must be made of chiefs who warmly invited and received the missionaries in their domains for the establishment of faith, having suffered a lot in the hands of the European traders and other Christian denominations. They decided to accept the lesser evil by relying on the Catholic missionaries.

Generally, these individual laity devotees worked with open-mindedness with the missionaries who were not so much used to the culture and language of the people, but had communication skills with which they succeeded in manipulating the less privileged people

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 27.

⁶³ Cardinal D. Ekanem, 1980, quoted in G. A. OJo “*Emergence of Laity Organizations in Nigeria*” in A.O. Makozi and G.A. OJo (eds), The History of the Catholic Church in Nigeria Lagos: Macmillan Press, 1982, p.84.

who flew to their patronage for protection, healing and the acquisition of white man's education. Through these strategies, as enumerated above, the missionaries succeeded in planting the faith in Igboland despite the difficulties encountered, as they had their peculiar techniques through the establishment of "community villages", schools, aids to the people, use of power and authority imposition, gifts and health care provisions, etc. In our evaluation here, we shall consider the early missionary influence in relation to the world-view of the Igbos under the following headlines: (1) evangelization, (2) evangelization in the hands of the indigenous: clergy and laity, (3) effect on the communal family and (4) nature of ecclesiology: problem of faith-commitment.

6.1 Evangelization

Realizing the work of the early missionaries and the conditions under which they operated, we cannot but acknowledge and express our heartfelt gratitude to the efforts they made to expand the faith. These "missionaries, men and women, who worked for a long time on the African continent",⁶⁴ risking their lives to plant the gospel message of Jesus Christ, however, deserve our praise considering their circumstances and courage. They really brought civilization to the people through education and helped to expose the people to other aspects of living and worshipping God.

Nevertheless, evangelization was actually the main general theme of the 1994 African Synod as it was tied to the development of inculturation with a view to balancing the nature of the early missionary activities. Evangelization as treated above aims at "bringing the Good News into all the strata of humanity, and through its influence transforming humanity from within and making it new. The purpose of evangelization is precisely this interior change"⁶⁵. The broadened nature of evangelization extends from complementary and mutual enriching elements, as inner adherence, to Christ entry into the community structure. This involves witness and apostolic initiative, human promotion, transformation of cultures and of unjust structures of the society to urgency that is incumbent on all the

64 M. Browne, *Op. cit.*, p. 74.

65 J. .P. Schotte (ed.), p. 11-12.

faithful to team up to build God's kingdom on earth⁶⁶. In the light of this, we can hold that evangelization appears clearly to all under its double aspects as proclamation of the Word of salvation and inculturation. It also makes a double demand of witness for each particular Church and each baptized person, namely to welcome the Good News down to the roots of the cultures⁶⁷ that received it at each epoch, with the Greeks and the Latins, with the Anglo-Saxons and the Germanic peoples, etc. In other words, Igbo situation should not have been different, as it is clearly seen above that the early missionary system of evangelization did not qualify in this double-faced perspective, though it succeeded in planting the gospel message, but not without its problems.

Gospel was announced to the Igbos through the framework of European culture that was considered better and more "Christian", while only those elements of Igbo culture that fitted into that framework were incorporated in the process like the use of personnel. Igbo culture as such was not really considered or utilized as an *instrument* of evangelization⁶⁸. It is clear in the above presentation that the first evangelization was still at the level of proclamation. An evangelization, which limits itself to the dimension of proclamation only, "will be disfigured" and eventually remains unrooted. For it is in a dialogue and in collaboration of duty, of which the inculturation of the message is the necessary option⁶⁹, that evangelization is rooted within a given culture. In other words, for there to be true root-taking of the Gospel message, there is the need for a true dialogue of inculturation between the Gospel and the traditional culture of the people. Hence, the belief exists that "the 'defective ecclesiology' and missionary methods of the nineteenth century, resulted in African 'missions' that continue to be at great risk of never becoming fully local Churches"⁷⁰. Despite the fact that Igbo Christianity has celebrated her one hundred years of evangelization, the Gospel message has not yet become truly local in its Catholic Churches

66 Cf. Paul VI, *Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 13: AAS 68 (1976), Nos. 12, 18 and 22.

67 Cf. M. Brown, (ed.) *Op. cit.*, p. 74.

68 J. S. Ukpong, *A Critical Review of the Lineamenta*, p. 36; Cf. others, E. Uzukwu, "The Birth and Development of the Local Church – difficulties and signs of hope", pp., 1-13; E. Mveng, "The Historical Background of the African Synod", pp., 20-31, J. M. Waliggo, "The Synod of Hope at a time of Crisis in Africa", pp.199-210; Archbishop J. O. Onaiyekan, "The Church in Africa Today – Reflections on the African Synod", pp. 211-219, all in Browne (ed.), *The African Synod, Documents, Reflections, Perspectives*, New York: Maryknoll, Orbis Books, 1996.

69 Message of the 1994 African Synod in M. Brown, *Op. cit.*, p. 75.

70 New People Media Centre, in M. Brown, *Ibid.*, p. 17.

in the true sense of inculturation. Despite the initial attempts at inculturation since Vatican II, the Church in Igboland of Nigeria still appears foreign and sometimes colonial in the eyes of the local people⁷¹. Almost every diocese still depends heavily on financial assistance from Rome and elsewhere to carry out its essential services of formation, catechesis, and evangelization⁷². But what do we expect to get from the European missionaries who came with the notion of savaging and converting the “Barbaric people through imperial cultural imposition” and never regarded their cultural life of the people as a means of evangelization? The situation will not be more than what we have at present if nothing is done to incarnate the message of Christ. This should be more in practice and within the cultural life of the people than just melting out principles as is the actual case with our spiritual leaders.

In view of the early evangelization, we need the type of mission that is prophetic, integral, dialogal and collaborative as it will be concerned with how the people’s context shapes the interpretation of the Good News. It is this contextual, prophetic and dialogal mission of today, within this new era of evangelization, that poses a challenge to re-activate the selfless participation of the clergy and laity in building and transforming the unjust structures of the society through collaboration, a society where many people do not have the basic needs for living and access to fundamental human right. Poverty, political instability and lack of freedom are rampant in many places today in Igboland. Such a situation no doubt affects effective communal life of the people and the continual evangelical process.

6.2 Evangelization in the hands of the indigenous: clergy and laity

We handled this part during our description in the early chapters, but under evaluation, it is important to highlight the issues regarding the process of evangelization. What actually is at stake? The stage of missionary activity, which is the propagation of the faith, gives way to pastoral activity among the faithful as the faith spreads. The nurturing of

71 Reports from many Fathers of the Synod and feed backs from Locals Churches in respect of the given 80 questions concerning the extent of evangelization in Africa did prove that the message is yet to touch the core lives of Africans as imbedded in their culture.

72 New People’s Media Centre in Brown, *Op cit.*, pp. 16-17.

faith, which is the dynamic watering of the already sown seed to enable it to grow and to mature, remains today's challenge for the local Church. This is a challenge for enriching and strengthening the already accepted faith, which involves the continual spreading of the evangelizing process to all levels of the country with deep faith-commitment. It calls for co-ordinated participation of the clergy and the laity. It calls also for self-commitment and self-awareness. How did the indigenous Church (the clergy and the laity) continue with this spirit of mission activity? Was there a growth in faith after the missionaries? Was there a change in strategy and in method?

As Christianity has gone into the hands of the local evangelizers (local clergy and laity), a question of how far has Christianity been rooted will be met with such answers coming from some prominent African theologians like Ukpong and Enwerem in view of our general discussion in this chapter. Justin S. Ukpong strongly holds that "it must be noted that Christianity will never take root in the hearts of Africans unless there is a struggle by African Christians themselves to understand the Christian faith and unless that struggle is encouraged"⁷³. Ukpong sees the need of Christ entering into the cultural history of Nigerians, Igbos, through inculturation, which challenges all her theologians for its exploration. He believes that mission should have a local face, but not divorced of the universality. And Iheanyi Enwerem regrets the ugly situation where the local evangelization in Igboland finds it difficult to change the pre-Vatican II institutional method of hierarchical structure. He writes:

But with the emergency of political independence in 1960 and following the Second Vatican Council, the Church in Igboland has been struggling for a more appropriate self-understanding and for Christianity to be rooted in her culture. Naturally and for a long time, this post-colonial Church followed the same method of spreading the faith, which she inherited from the foreign missionaries and to a great degree, shared their mentality, prejudices and canons of orthodoxy. Even today, after many years of formal departure of the Irish missionaries as a collective missionary force and the complete takeover of the Church by the native hierarchy, the Church in Igbo land is still very much foreign. The structures and colonial modes of running the Church are still the same as in colonial Christianity"⁷⁴.

⁷³ J. S. Ukpong, "A Critical Review of the Lineamenta", *Op. cit.*, p. 41.

⁷⁴ I. N. Enwerem, "Theology in Igboland: A Critique in Method" in B. Okoro, *Op. cit.*, p. 73.

In our evaluation of this chapter, following our presentation above and in light of S. Ukpong and I. Enwerem including many other Igbo theologians we consulted during this research work, it is glaringly clear that the inherited ecclesia still remain peripheral and at the level of discussion in Igboland. This is the situation that has challenged Africans in general to begin to restructure their theological and pastoral stand in the light of Vatican II, their cultural life-style and the mission today. Latin American Liberation theology is seen as an option for the poor and the oppressed. In Africa, especially in Nigeria, and more particularly in Igboland, the option of liberation is not only democracy, but also needs special prophetic voice that condemns evil and extol justice in order to free man from the slavery of militancy and unjust structures caused by supremacy of power. Liberation from an oppressive bondage, from imposition of power, etc., is very paramount in our society today. And pastorally, the agents of evangelization (laity and clergy) have a greater role to play as it concerns humanity in relation to justice and peace, only if there is effective spirit of collaboration and understanding among them. Following the present nature of being Church in Igboland, there is need for real inculturation to enable evangelizers to work in faithful collaboration. Generally speaking, Africa, no doubt, has suffered a lot due to poor political and religious administration caused not only by military dictatorship, but also by religious clerical syndrome which has been demonstrated in the following countries: Angola, Southern Sudan, Liberia, Sierra-Leone, Somalia, Burundi, Rwanda and Nigeria, etc. These nations have the common characteristic of a political independence that ended in chaos and religious authority that cry for re-orientation. The treatment of the early missionary evangelization in Africa, particularly in Igboland, is visually seen as incomplete if not related to its effect on the cultural life of the people who operate communally.

6.3 Effect on the communal family

Earlier, we saw how communal the Igbos were before the advent of Christianity. With the establishment of western influence through the spirit of divide and rule that perverts the nature of evangelization, the household structure changed drastically. The so called modern era that followed colonialism and early evangelization permitted families to withdraw from their intense involvement with the surrounding community, paying the appropriate price (no more common feasts as such), just as prices had to be paid in each of the other categories of

sentiment. Sentiment in the household means that privacy, application of nucleus family and intimacy will triumph over the traditional inter-stretching with the lives of others in the extended family system. What it means is that some people find themselves totally secluded behind closed shutters from the outside world⁷⁵. Following the structural change of ideology, the conception of family gradually took up a new perspective in relation to what used to be.

One of the reasons why family life in traditional Europe differs so fundamentally from that of the African is its physical setting: the structure of the household, the size of the domestic group, the occasions within the community for coming together, the excuses to watch the neighbours and the spirit of relationship⁷⁶. In the Igbo traditional community of *umunna*, people are essentially united and they work in collaboration despite all the particular, different conditions that appear to separate them; while in the European system as exhibited in Igboland, people are essentially separated despite all the unifying traits that appear to homogenize them in view of authority or power. What it means is that in the traditional (pre-European) set up in Igboland, people were willing to renounce their self comforts in order to keep the communal family's honour intact: emphasis is on “‘relationship’ - ‘being-with’, ‘living-with’, ‘belonging-to’”⁷⁷ that used to be sacred as it involves the living and the dead as previously treated in chapter four mainly. European missionaries rather emphasized more on bureaucratisation and hierarchical structure of power and relationship.

While the Igbos emphasis was on “we-mentality”, life of collaboration, the westerners extol the “I-mentality”, life of individualism. Individual self-realization predominates and takes precedence over community stability. The career and happiness of individual members of the family triumph over the continuation of the lineage as a whole. Western

75 A. Shorter, *Op. cit.*, p. 26.

76 Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 31.

77 Many of the African theologians do express this view. See M. Nussbaum, “*Narrative Emotions: Beckett's Genealogy of Love*” in Stanley Hauerwas and L. Gregory Jones (eds.), *Why Narrative? Readings in Narrative Theology*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989, pp. 216-248, quoted in Elochukwu E. Uzukwu, “*Healing Memories: The Church as agent of Reconciliation in the Service of the Kingdom*”, in *The Bulletin of Ecumenical Theology - Christian Mission In The Third Millenium, Globalisation and Reconciliation*, Nigeria: The Ecumenical Association of Nigerian Theologians Publication, Vol. 9, 1-2, 1997, p. 110.

missionary philosophy tendency is to emphasis the absolute originality and concreteness of the human person, despite their applied community approach to evangelization – “being-for-itself”. This is because “philosophy of the west does not necessarily recognize the fundamental need of relationship for the realization of the self, though, people might stay together, but the ideas are disintegrated”⁷⁸. As the “I-ness” is constituted before the “We-ness”, the effort here is how one can make a name as an entity in a community. On the contrary, the Igbo “tendency is to insist on relationship”, the spirit of collaboration as essential to the constitution of the “I”. It will be difficult to understand an individual in isolation without the “essential linkages to divinities, family, kindred and ethnic group and communal collective activities”⁷⁹. The human person is in dynamic tension towards realizing the self; thus the self becomes an unfinished sentence. The successful person, an ancestor, is one who has lived through this relationship in active collaboration with others⁸⁰.

This helps to show the distinctive difference between the western acceptance of communal justice and that of the Igbos in relation to individual life. For the western, justice in communalism is determined in a level of give to everyone what is his due, in other words, what he deserves as an individual. In Igbo world-view, justice here does not focus exclusively on relating “man to man, but more with man and the entire realities”⁸¹. This involves a whole pattern of relationship with all that is, including man and man, man and nature (the cosmos), as well as man and the invisible realities. Igbo unique feature is not a singularity affair, but a “being with”, as we saw earlier and it is the very bases to claim the Igbo title⁸². Ontological relationship in Africa in general is so tight and “is opposed to the European concept of individuated things in themselves isolated from others”⁸³ Igbo psychology cannot conceive of man as an individual or as a “force existing by itself and different from its ontological relationship with other living beings and from its connection with animate or inanimate forces around it”⁸⁴. The danger is that with these individualistic

78 Cf. E. E. Uzukwu, *Op. cit.*, p. 110.

79 *Ibid.*, p. 110.

80 *Ibid.*, pp. 110-111.

81 Cf. J. C. Ekei, *Op. cit.*, p. 176.

82 C. B. Okoro, “*What Is To Be African?*”, p. 5, quoted in J. C. Ekei, *Ibid.*, p. 176.

83 Cf. P. Tempels, an originator of Bantu Philosophy, p. 103, in J. C. Ekei, *Op. cit.*, p. 177

84 *Ibid.*, p. 177.

tendencies, people began to see others as means to an end, consequently, controversies, rivalries, unhealthy frictional competitions, and etc became the order of the day instead of the people's cultural serenity and love that should reign supreme.

Things were no longer what they used to be. The spirit of communalism even till today is in question in some parts of Africa. "Members of ethnic groups are no longer ashamed to stand behind leaders even when the latter are wrong". Moreover, "respect is no longer shown to elders, the aged and the sacred which has resulted in the loss of a decency and appreciation for human life"⁸⁵. We cannot but lament the gradual disappearance of some vital aspects of African cultures that once contained and, in many cases, still contain wholesome values that were the mainstay of people's lives. These include a strong communal life, hospitality, concern for each other, a sense of the sacred, idiomatic expressions, proverbs, the spirit of sharing and collaborating, etc. Moreover, "ethnicity, a great gift from God that gave the African his or her dignity and point of reference is no longer strong" as it used to be. "All these wonderful values have, unfortunately degenerated into ethnocentric arrogance"⁸⁶. The lives of the many youths today are no longer what it used to be and the political life has nothing to write home about. Our source of hope is that these values are not totally annihilated but merely suppressed. With the process of the new evangelization, there is the need to reactivate these good cultural values in Nigeria Church, particularly in Igboland.

It is unfortunate that till today since her Independence, "political instability throughout Nigeria is an illusion", a colonial servitude which has been replaced by indigenous oppressive terror that is reflected in discrimination, favouritism, tribalism and nepotism. Consequently, the people live in uncertainty, fear, helplessness, wretchedness, despair and hopelessness as hunger tortures many⁸⁷. Undoubtedly, such situations do affect faith-commitment as worship requires a healthy atmosphere and sense of belonging.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 177.

⁸⁶ P. Lwaminda, (Former Secretary General of AMECEA), "*The Church-as-family*" in AFER, (African Ecclesial Review), August/October/December, Vol., 41, Number 4-6., AMECEA, Kenya-Nairobi: Gaba Publication, 1999.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

6.4 Nature of ecclesiology: problem of faith-commitment

As missionary enterprise in Igbo did not adequately touch the innermost depths of native cultures, Christian faith did not pass through the culture of the people. The reason is due to “lack of an accurate knowledge of the people’s languages, customs and mentality on the part of the missionaries”⁸⁸. Moreover, there was an overemphasis on the western form of Christianity almost to the point of identifying Christianity with Western Culture. This definitely was a wrong direction taken in African mission history. Such a colonial attitude was sanctioned by the Conference of Berlin (1885), and it influenced some missionaries. As a result, missions were also dependent on colonial powers, thus confusing evangelization with colonization⁸⁹. This is the nature of ecclesiology we inherited as Igbos. No wonder up till today, the Church remains foreign and still at the level of adaptation.

In Igboland, for instance, the process of giving the converts a new orientation, a new cultural system of life was introduced and the original culture of the people was gradually discarded in preference to the new life-system. Consequently, Catholicism suppressed the traditional culture on which it was grafted at its inception in the development of the new religion. Suffice it to say that the new religion gave a new meaning, a new definition of the symbols and the structures of the culture and of the traditional religious practices of the people before Christianity. Good a thing, the culture of the people was not exterminated.

The early converts in Eastern Nigeria, for instance, were taken out of their cultural background into a new established village community and given a new orientation of life totally different from their former lives as seen above⁹⁰. For the Igbos, “it was a cultural

88 F. G. Frenández *et al.* (eds), *Mission History of Africa, in Sebastian, Op. cit.*, pp. 196-214.

89 *Ibid.*, p. 203.

90 Cf. C. Obi, (ed.) *Op. cit. The History of Catholic Church in Nigeria, 1880-1980*, Nigeria-Enugu: Snaap’s Press, 1980; Adrian Hastings, *Church and Mission in Modern Africa*, London: Burns & Oates Press, 1967. - Hastings maintains that it was the “19th century missionary approach: that of the Christians village, the Chrétienté. The missionaries were relatively few and were mostly in areas greatly upset by slavery and the slave trade and almost everywhere their work and outlook was controlled by this last phenomenon: they came out rightly inflamed against it, inspired as they were by the anti-slavery campaigners in Europe from Wilberforce to Lavigerie. Propaganda Fide sent them money from Rome to redeem slaves. And redeemed slaves they did. Slaves were bought; runaway slaves were befriended; any outcast of local society was also gladly received and a Christian village was formed around the mission where the new Christians would be safe not only from slave traders but also from all the corruptions of pagan society”, p. 80.

alienation instead of seeing it as a way of submitting themselves to the ethics of Christ and to a total conversion to the new life”⁹¹. For effective collaboration through inculturation, the option is the new ecclesia that involves the second aspect of evangelization: incarnation of the Gospel message for the people of Igboland.

In the light of the new orientation of evangelization, there have been a “first insight into the concept of mission and the new understanding of attitudes to other religions, the Church has now a modified attitude to traditional religion(s) and cultures”⁹². After a careful study of African traditional religion, Pope John Paul II, in his message to African Christians, opines that: “The Church views with great respect the moral and religious values of African tradition, not only because of their meaning, but also because she sees them as providential, as the basis for spreading the gospel message and beginning the establishment of the new society in Christ”⁹³. Pope John Paul II insists on root-taking of the Gospel message through mutual dialogue between faith and culture: “The synthesis between culture and faith is not only a demand of culture but also of the faith”⁹⁴.

Vatican II has called on all to appreciate and be enriched by the “treasures” which the bountiful Creator “has distributed among the nations of the earth”⁹⁵. Joseph Ballong-Wen-Mewuda adds, “this is possible only if there is genuine respect for peoples and their cultures, especially cultures that are totally imbued with and penetrated by religion”⁹⁶. He further noted that “the Church today does not want to see the disappearance of traditional religion(s). Rather they should find a renewed existence in the Church”⁹⁷, and to make his point, he quoted John Paul II’s address to Amerindians in Santo Domingo, where the Pope stated that “the Church exhorts indigenous peoples to preserve and promote with legitimate pride the culture of their people, their sound traditions and customs, languages and

91 The view of the majority of the people interviewed.

92 Joseph et al., *Op. cit.*, p. 296.

93 Paul VI, *African Terrarum*, N. 8. Quoted in Joseph et al. (eds.), *Ibid.*, p. 297.

94 John Paul II, “Discourse to the Participants at the National Congress of the Church Movement for Cultural Encounter”, Rome: Vatican Press, January 16, 1982, p. 605; Cf. *Lineamenta*, *Ibid.*, p. 48.

95 *Vatican II*, Decree on the Churches Missionary Activity, (*Ad Gentes 11*).

96 J. Ballong-Wen-Mewuda et al. (eds.), *Op. cit.*, p. 297.

97 *Ibid.*, p. 297.

cultures”⁹⁸. While addressing the Africans, the same Pope made us understand that inculturation through dialogue is the best solution to African missionary problem when he indicates: “An important aspect of your own evangelization role is the whole dimension of the inculturation of the Gospel into the lives of your people. The Church truly respects the culture of each people”. He also made it clear to them that the Gospel Message, through the Church, aims at recognizing many of the cultural values and does not intend to destroy what is good and beautiful. Rather, “the gospel purifies the values and takes into Christian worship certain elements of the people’s customs. The Church comes to bring Christ. Evangelization aims at penetrating and elevating culture by the power of the Gospels”⁹⁹.

With reference to faith-commitment, we have to understand that following the conversion of the Igbos into a new faith, liminality existed. This is realized in a transitional period or stage in religious conversion from one religion to another; like when the convert clings to practices of the old faith, while at the same time trying to acquire those of the new faith and its value systems and ethical codes. Liminality could be seen as a two edged sword, sharp or blunt, good or bad. If conversion, for instance, helps to retain all the good values of the old religion, it is said to be positive; but if it is only a nominal conversion that leads to a kind of religious syncretism, it is negative¹⁰⁰. To prevent such a negative approach to Christianity, there is need to insist on dialogue and collaboration through inculturation¹⁰¹. True inculturation goes beyond the adaptation of external practices, symbols and languages. It is grafting on to whatever is true and noble. The gospel is to be grafted on to the living tree of the African Traditional Religion¹⁰², which is foundational in the life of all the Africans. “Traditional religions are expressions of the bountiful treasures which God has bestowed on peoples...The Church would be poorer without their religious

98 Cf. John Paul II, “*Address to Amerindians at Santo Domingo*”, in Bulletin, Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue, 28 (1993), p. 77.

99 Cf. L'Osservatore Romano Special Edition in English, March-April 1982, p. 22 quoted in C. N. Etokudoh, “*The Church’s Mission in Nigeria Beyond the year 2000*”, a paper presented at the bi-Annual meeting of the Association of Nigerian Priest in Belgium on the 24th April 1998, published in A. Njoku (ed.), The Holy Spirit Lectures vol. 1, Belgium: Leuven Press, April 1999 p. 25.

100 J. Ballong, *Op. cit.*, p. 296.

101 Cf. Message of the Synod, Cf. Brown *Op. cit.*, No. 13, p. 75.

102 J. Ballong, *Op. cit.*, p. 298.

wisdom. It can only enrich the Christian for it shares in the unfathomable wisdom of God”¹⁰³.

The early missionary’s method of evangelization that was relevant at the period due to the nature of mission was more of mere transplantation into various cultural climates of the Latin Church: liturgy, theology, spirituality, Church organization, arts, etc. Today, the story is no longer the same. Vatican II has given the Church a new perspective for mission, governance and formation that are relevant to the culture, which needs to be explored to march with time through new system of being Church.

7. Conclusion

Having gone through the above, our stand becomes a bit clearer. While the Church is growing in Igboland, we need to match it with good faith of bearing with one another. When members are divided in their loyalty to the ultimate, when people are not collaborating in mission activities, we cannot but turn to inculturation. It has the objective mission “to make Christianity enter the very blood and vein of the people, to make it answer their aspirations and anxieties; to make Igbo Christians recover their one identity rather than live in dualism, with one foot in Christianity and the other in an her world-view and to make the agents of evangelization function collaboratively”¹⁰⁴.

The evangelical need which ensures that the Good News is “more deeply lived, celebrated and shared”¹⁰⁵ makes inculturation and the spirit of collaboration imperative. We need the activity of inculturation that is operative in the spirit of dialogue and collaboration. Dialogue has to deal with the culture and the Christian religion, and collaboration has to be realized among all the agents of evangelization. By seeing the Church as communion, people of God are challenged for today’s nature of evangelization to plunge to the deep, to recover the cultural values that will help to propagate the faith. Vatican II speaks of “a

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 298.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

¹⁰⁵ P Schineller, A Handbook on Inculturation. New Yourk: Paulist Press, 1980, p .3.

living exchange between the Church and the diverse cultures of the people”¹⁰⁶. From its nature of dialogue, the attitude goes beyond mere “adaptation” which was developed particularly between 1920 and 1935”¹⁰⁷. Dialogue and collaboration envisage the reorientation and innovation of culture in view of “trans humanity from within and making it new”¹⁰⁸.

However, more emphasis is still on the aspect of dialogue between the Gospel, culture (ATR) and collaboration between the clergy and laity which is really necessary today to facilitate faith-commitment and holistic worship among the Catholic community members. In our presentation above, there was lack of dialogue, not only between the missionaries who saw themselves as superior to the native people they were ministering to, but also between the traditional religion that is the bed rock of the communal life and Christianity. This is due to the method of evangelization that was practised outside the reach of the community villagers, through organized “Christian communities”. A type of ecclesia that was alienated from the true life of the people due to the nature of the early missionary evangelization that suppressed Igbo culture and planted a “European Superior Culture” syndrome through the use of authoritarian powers of administration has been called into question today in light of Vatican II that stresses on “communal ecclesia” and too, in light with the sacred cultural life of the Igbos.

The authoritarian system of dividing the community of the faithful into two, the commanding few and the unquestioningly obeying majority, plays against the spirit of dialogue or a fruitful collaboration that demands a fair treatment in view of human dignity. Moreover, Christian faith has not deeply penetrated into the cultural life of the people since Christianity at the time of inception did not enter into mutual dialogue with ATR; hence, the lack of inculturation, which is tantamount to the lack of the rootedness of the Gospel into the life-style of the people.

106 Vatican II, G.S. 44.

107 Y. Conger, “*The Role of the Church in the modern world*”, in H. Vorgrimmler (ed.) Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II, Vol. V, London: New York, 1969, p. 221;

108 *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, NO 18. See also. Vatican II, G.S. 40, 43, 57, 58, 62, quoted in Roest, *Op; cit.*, p. 736.

I will advise that we abide by the words of Pope John Paul II to Africans, where he says: “The acculturation or ‘inculturation’, which you promote, will truly be a reflection on the incarnation of the Word. By respecting and fostering the particular values and riches of your people’s heritage, you will be in a position to lead them to a better understanding of the mystery of Christ which is to be lived in the concrete and daily experience of African life. Thus not only is Christianity relevant to Africa but Christ in the members of his Body is Himself African”¹⁰⁹. This is what is expected in Igbo ecclesiology which has to favour the spirit of communalism which is gradually getting disintegrated these days as we saw in our comparative analysis above.

Whether dead or alive, the Igbo concept of communalism is strong and every effort is made, for instance, to bury the dead within the legitimate communal land as they are regarded as the “living dead” capable of playing the role of intermediary between God and the living, as recognized ancestors. Moreover, in Igbo set up, coexistence or belongingness gives a person the necessary grounds for his just claims for complaints against interference, for denial of attention, of rights or of marginalization, especially in communal settings. In this case, “co-existence”, like “legitimacy” gives one “the right to perform a certain type of action without exposing oneself to criticism of a practical-based kind: being a capacity to exercise a certain choice with institutional impurity”¹¹⁰. Ekei, relating this to Igbo people, concludes that “within a given institution, “co-existence” or “belongingness” serves as a moral standard of judgment”¹¹¹, even among the Africans, hence the life of communalism.

What is manifested is a community of people who are individually free to organize and to carry out their functions with a purpose of community development in view of collaboration. What binds the community together is a common faith in the communion with the invisible, the ancestors, a profound love of the brethren that unite all, individual intentions notwithstanding. The constant unalloyed relationship with the ancestors, accounted to a great extent, the strong community spirit of the Igbo.

109 John Paul II, “*The Real time and value of the African person and society*” – addressed to the Kenyan Bishops in Nairobi, Kenya, May, 1980, in *AFER*, 22, 1980, pp. 211-217.

110 P. Philip, “*Judging Justice*”, p. 77, quoted in J. Chukwuemeka Ekei, *Op. cit.*, p. 177.

111 J.C. Ekei, *Op.cit.*, p. 177.

However, it is important to note that by extolling the good values of Igbo culture, one is not to be branded as a reactionary in relation to today's trend of thought and behaviour. Really, it would be absurd for me to appear to be rejecting the present world I am encapsulated in, as to crown every aspect of the olden days worthy of revisiting, especially, knowing the fact that our traditional culture has also got its tinted negative symbolic gestures that need to be purified with the advent of Christianity. No! I am trying to be objective to the reality of life, following the trend of events and the relevant documents available, that certain values of the past or within the culture are very pertinent to help us address our pastoral challenges today. This is important, especially, when it is discovered that the nature of the early missionary evangelization did not favour the use of these cultural values that will help to promote the gospel message. Moreover, today's mission calls for the review of the strategies employed by these early evangelizers with a view to employing inculturation for effective indigenous participation.

Accepting the Good News means the readiness to establishing a community of faith, a community of salvation, and a community of collaboration, which in turn becomes an evangelizing community through its life-style and active commitment. Inculturation in this context calls for a renewal of humanity that involves an interior change in both individuals and community members "collective conscience". The observation of missionary evangelization is very apt here:

- (a) African traditional religion still influences Christians, especially in Igboland and lives many in double loyalty.
- (b) The Church has to respect the religion and culture of the people. This is because in Igboland, religion, culture and custom are closely related to such an extent that the people have no separate words for them. Their nature of communal collaboration works well for them and as such, needs to be revisited in the new ecclesia.
- (c) The better the culture and the religion of the people are understood, the *meilleur* the Gospel can be preached. Vatican Council II advocates for a deeper theological research in

each cultural area in order to enable the particular Church to better achieve its identity and makes its proper contribution to the universal Church¹¹².

112 C.f. Catholic Bishop's Conference of Nigeria, "*The Nigerian Church: Evangelization through Inculturation, Pastoral Letter, Nigeria-Lagos*: Catholic secretariat, 1991. See also Act. 17: 23 (Cf Quoted in Jan P. Schotte, (ed.), *The Church in Africa and her Evangelization mission Towards the Year 2000*, -'You Shall be my Witnesses Acts: 1:8), (*Lineamenta*) Vat. City, 1990.

CHAPTER VI

THEOLOGICAL TRADITION ON ECCLESIAL COMMUNION AND MINISTRIES

In our descriptive analysis, which is highlighted by the nature of the early missionary evangelization, it has been observed that there is poor collaboration existing between the clergy and the laity in Igboland of Nigeria. This is due to the existing nature of ecclesiology. There is no doubt that this has a historical foundation following the concentration of power in the hands of the clergy at the expense of the laity. As we shall see, the power concentration into the hands of the clergy has not only resulted in division between the two groups in the Church, but is also responsible for the “apathy and inertia that one notices in the bulk of the laity today”¹. Reverend Kurien Kunnumpuram holds that even though there are “to be sure, a small but growing members of lay people who are clamouring for a say in the decision-making process in the Church, they are not really representative of the lay people who are mostly passive”². In spite of all the teachings of Vatican II and after it concerning the lay people working in collaboration with the clergy in the life and mission of the Church, our Church in Igboland still has a long way to go as regards real empowerment or effective cooperation.. Having been confronted with these problems of hierarchy, clericalism and institutionalism that make it difficult for laity to collaborate very well with the clergy in pastoral activities, it is necessary for us in this chapter to trace the historical cause of the poor collaboration between clergy-laity with a view to finding the necessary theological and practical solution to the problem.

We shall begin with a brief survey of the historical and the theological processes that are fundamental for the existing nature of ecclesiology, which gave rise to the existing nature of the clergy-laity division. This chapter will begin with the nature of collaboration during the time of Christ and the early Christians, especially, in the Pauline ecclesia. Then, we shall go on to discuss the origin of clergy-laity division in the history of the Church, which will enable us to examine the importance of the Council of Trent and the positive contributions of Vatican II and the Post-Conciliar documents of the

1 Cf. K. Kunnumpuram, SJ, “*Beyond the Clergy-Laity Divide*”, May 22, 2000, pp. 1-11.

2 *Ibid.*, May 22, 2000, pp. 1-11.

Magisterium. In this perspective, effort will be made to develop some theological reflections on the question of collaboration that we are discussing. This is where we shall try to refer to Pope Paul II who looks at the issue globally, and associate it with the insight of professor Uzukwu who will narrow it down to our context. As an Igbo theologian, he will act as a transitional flag bearer, whose opinion, as it were, will synthesize other afore-mentioned discussions within the context and present a clearer view of our direction.

Then the question is: what will history and the theological tradition have to offer us with regard to clergy-laity relationship and its ecclesiological presuppositions? How mutually collaborative were the “clergy” and “laity” and in the early Christian communities? How did their division gradually set in with time and why? To handle these questions in relation to our work, we will then present the following points for discussion here: (1) insight from the New Testament, (2) division between the clergy and the laity (3) the teaching of the Council of Trent, (4) the teaching of Vatican II as an improvement of the Trent Council, (5) the teaching of the *Magisterium* and the complementary voice of an Igbo theologian, (6) reflection and (7) the conclusion.

1. Insight from the New Testament

Generally, the New Testament writings present the view that God gives us the Gospel, the Church and its ministers who are called to work in collaboration as they are being sent out in pairs as missionaries. The first missionaries were the apostles, being prepared by Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son. The missionary “ministers serve the Church; the Church serves the Gospel”³. The idea here is that Christ started the ministry of the Father’s kingdom that was carried on through the apostles who continued the work of their master which involves bearing witness as a group of collaborators by building up the larger community of disciples in the service of the Gospel message. Thus, our reflection on the New Testament will be handled under: (1) Jesus as the model of collaboration, and (2) the continuity of this spirit of collaboration by the early Christian communities.

3 D. Bartlett, *Ministry in the New Testament*, USA: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2001, p. 185.

1.1 Jesus as the model of collaboration

Jesus presented himself as a servant of all (Mk 10: 45; Lk. 22: 27; Jn 13: 1-20) and recent studies maintain that these traditions are rooted in the historical Jesus who worked collaboratively with the disciples. For Walker Kasper, the proclamation of God's kingdom by Jesus Christ took a personal embodiment in his life and activities in the form of service to others, which he achieved by cooperating with his disciples. Jesus saw his loving service to others and ultimately his death on the cross as a way of healing human alienation and guilt, thereby, establishing a lasting reconciliation of humanity with God⁴ who wished to reconcile all things to Himself. Edward Schillebeeckx maintains that Christ faced his death "as a final and extreme service to the cause of God as the cause of men"⁵. This principle of service is actually one of the important characteristics of ecclesial community leaders. Thomas Rausch, in projecting what should be the attitude of today's priest in a society, presented this well when he writes: "This concept of service became a specifically ecclesial concept when the primitive Christian Churches adopted the Greek word *diakonia* to express the idea of service and leadership in and for the Christian Community"⁶. *Ministerium* is the Latin word for Greek *diakonia*, through which we get the English equivalent of *ministry*, which in the Church's community designates service and is tied to the spirit of collaboration as one serves a community of believers.

However, Jesus in Saint John's Gospel made it clear that belief in Christianity also involves human growth within the process. Having established a familial relationship with his apostles, whom he served and worked with, he made them understand that he relates to them no longer on a master-servant basis but as friend to friend collaboration. He said to the apostles "I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends"⁷ as you work in harmony with me. I call you friends because you now know and share the activities I have come to establish in the world in collaboration with me; and you will continue it yourselves till the end of the world⁸. Presenting his activity as a model to be followed, having washed the feet of his apostles, Jesus said to them:

4 Cf. K. Walker, *Jesus the Christ*, New York: Paulist Press, 1976, pp. 120-121.

5 E. Schillebeeckx, *Jesus*, New York: Crossroad Publication, 1981, p. 311 quoted in T. P. Rausch, *Priesthood Today: an appraisal*, New York: Paulist Press, 1992, p. 40.

6 John 13:12-15.

7 Jn.15:15.

8 Cf. Matt. 28.

Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord -- and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have set you an example that you also should do as I have done to you⁹.

This passage shows that Jesus establishes a close link between his washing of the disciples' feet and the challenge he gave them to continue to wash the feet of others, which designates humility, love, service, collaboration and understanding, etc. Christ realized that the apostles could not grow nor participate actively in his ministry which for him means collaboration if he continued to deal with them in a *senioribus-junioribus* relationship. With slave-master relationship, every initiative comes from the master and the servants only acquiesce and carry out injunctions without even being challenged to contribute their talents. For Christ as seen in this passage, Christianity transcends cultural practices but is not divorced of its application by making use of its worthy values that will help the faith to grow.

Following Ernest Ezeogue's maxim, "every faith journey begins with the master-servant relationship". Here, you have the teacher, the bearer of the Gospel message, and the catechuminate that is being taught. The argument here is that, traditionally, the lay people were made to follow the spirituality of master-servant model where Jesus is venerated, feared, respected and obeyed rather than as a friend to be loved, to share functions in intimate way and to maintain a healthy collaborative spirit. Moreover, even if it is to be argued as such, it happens rather at the initial stage of embracing the faith. Christ made it known to the apostles that the leaders among them will have to assume servant positions, as a process of elevating others. Christ never encouraged the apostles to remain at that initial stage of their faith-commitment which has to grow to maturity. This involves ignoring or minimizing the unique power or authority the leader should have over others he is working with. As it were, by seeing others as friends and co-workers, the leader strives to use his authority in ways that acknowledges and respects the dignity of those he is working with, even though he is in charge pastorally. This strategy helps a lot by empowering the people to realize their natural freedom and endeavouring to collaborate more fully by bringing out their best while serving in the Lord's vine yard.

If Jesus, the master and model of apostolicity challenged us, the disciples of today, we need to grow and mature in our faith by associating into a less formal friend-to-friend collaboration and at the same time maintaining our respect to him. But the question is: why must the authorities of the Church insist through their actions that the laity ought to remain in their infancy stage of slave-master relationship with them when it comes to collaboration or work relationship? We have to understand, in effect, that our relationship with Christ goes through different stages in life just as Christianity grows structurally in its teachings and liturgies. We grow through our baptism, which identifies us with Christ, to the sacrament of confirmation and so on depending on one's call, in our virtue as Christians. Thus, as our relationship with Christ deepens, and as local people grow in their faith, in the light of the second Vatican Council, the mood of worship changes along with it. According to Reverend E. Ezeogu, this relationship eventually develops to "less formal friend-to-friend type". As our ecclesiology has Christ as the object of worship, there is the need to follow more closely, his style of pastoral activities when it comes to working as a group or relating with others. Today's nature of mission is a call for us to move beyond the infant stage, the servant-master relationship, to arrive at a more mature system of collaboration, the informal friend-to-friend way of association with one another and with Christ. We should be sufficiently armed as to be spiritually disciplined to foresee and to avoid all occasions of exploitation, suppression, and dependency attitude. This will help to change the attitude of the agents of evangelization as they learn to follow Christ the model of our faith more closely thereby respecting the gifts of all the members, clergy or laity. Moreover, this model of Christ was carried out after him by the early Christians as they represent him and his mission on earth.

1.2 Early Christian community and collaboration

During the New Testament times, the Church was understood as the people of God, a community characterized by radical freedom, radical equality, radical sharing and radical service. According to St Paul, it was a fellowship in which all racial, social and sexual differences were eliminated, (Cf. Gal 3:26-28)¹⁰. What Paul asserts here is that in the Church there is no place for the oppositions that prevail in the rest of society. Besides, the Christian community does not tolerate "domination and structures of domination which are customary in society. In the community of brothers, no fathers are permitted. The rule of God does not imply the rule of

humans". Jesus is absolutely forthright in the rejection of domination, (cf. Mk 10:42-45)¹¹.

Kurien Kunnumpuram, in the above citation, presents the view that in the early Church, what prevailed in the ecclesiology was egalitarianism, as people are created equal and related mutually. This indicates that leadership ministry which emerged in the history of the Church, like all other ministries, is for the building up of persons and communities in co-operation. Paul speaks of the authority "which the Lord gave for building you up and not tearing you down"¹². This means that the early Christian leaders saw themselves as ministers of Christ in the service of the people as they worked in collaboration¹³. There was no question of their lording it over the community¹⁴, their functions were effectively shared according to their gifts. Jesus, the servant, was the model for all Christian collaborative ministries¹⁵. E. Schillebeeckx bore witness to this fact when he writes:

According to Paul and the whole of the New Testament, at least within the Christian communities of believers, relationships involving subjection are no longer to prevail. We find this principle throughout the New Testament, and it was also to determine strongly the New Testament view of ministry. This early Christian egalitarian ecclesiology in no way excludes leadership and authority; but in that case, authority must be filled with the Spirit, from which no Christian, man or woman, is excluded, in principle, on the basis of the baptism of the Spirit¹⁶.

In the early Christian community, after the death of Christ in the New Testament, there existed no distinction of ranks in the Church as the members were engaged in their communities, sharing God's work of salvation to the human race. They found themselves gifted in various ways and these charisms were laid at the service of their communities. Ministry was in the wide and shared range of collaborative activities including prophecy, teaching, healing, counselling, caring for the poor, living a life of "*cor unum et anima una*" (one heart and one soul), encouraging and spreading of the Good News. At this point, no one was particularly concerned with the tabulation of all the activities or forces into titles. This means that there was no other rank the Church was regarded or addressed

¹¹ K. Kunnumpuram, *Op. cit.* pp. 1-11. See also G. Lohfink, *Jesus and Community*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984, pp. 92-93.

¹² 2 Cor. 10:8; see also 1 Cor. 13:10.

¹³ Cf. 2 Cor. 4:5; 1 Cor. 9:19.

¹⁴ Cf. 1 Pt. 5:1-5; 2 Cor. 1:24.

¹⁵ Cf. Mt 23:25-27; Mk. 10:42-45; Jn. 13:13-17.

¹⁶ E. Schillebeeckx, *Op. cit.*, p. 311.

to, other than the “people of God” (Christians sharing in God’s whole work of salvation). The Church is composed of the members who share and work in collaboration in the life of the risen Lord. As there is no distinction, all are accepted to play their roles according to their charisms: the Jews as well as the Greeks, free or slave, all are children of God, begotten by Christ and animated by the Holy Spirit.

Saint Paul uses the method of Christ as the head, and Christian community and members sharing in different functions in the Church according to their gifts, to illustrate the fact that all functions are necessary for the building and sustaining of the body of Christ, the Church. This is because no aspect of the functions is totalistic and that the effectiveness of the general participation depends on communal and collaborative sharing of duty. Their test, value, and exercise ought to be recognized in the community of the faithful who function for one purpose – building up the body of Christ, the Church. For Saint Paul, genuine spiritual gifts are distinguished by their conformity to Christian faith (12:1-3). His use of *charismata* embraced for him all graces given primarily for the benefit of the Christians, the mystical body of Christ.

These early Christians were not only one in their uniqueness as a human society, rather they were internally united, one in the equal partnership, not a particular group proved to be more important than others. In this spirit, they offered to all who belong to them the word without distinction or discrimination in their services. What could be considered as being special that really held them together and how would it be explained in relation to the function of the clergy and laity? – It is the Eucharist, the symbol of Christ in their midst. What caused the historical division among the united people of God? The answer to this question of the division between the laity and the clergy will be handled in the next subtopic.

2. Division between the clergy and the laity

Yves Congar, in his book *Lay People in the Church*, made us understand that "there is no distinction between ‘lay people’ and ‘clerics’ in the vocabulary of the New Testament"¹⁷. In his Letter to the Corinthians, written probably in the year 96, Clement of

17 Y. Congar, *Lay People in the Church*, London: Geoffrey Chapman Press, 1965, p. 4.

Rome spoke of *Laikos* who is distinguished from the high priest, the priests and the Levites¹⁸. Even at this, Kunnumpuram maintains: “for Clement the distinction between the clergy and the laity was a functional one and in no way went against the *koinonia*, the communion that existed among the members of the Corinthian Church”. Rather he concludes: “in spite of the use of this new terminology, there was really no clergy-laity division during the patristic period. It was during the Middle Ages (450-1450) that some significant changes took place which had far-reaching consequences for the life of the Church”¹⁹. First, there developed a conception whereby the clergy was being addressed as *spiritual* while the laity was regarded as *carnal*, meaning *worldly*. But in the early Church, baptism was the dividing line between the “spirit of Christ” and the “spirit of the world”. For, at baptism, a person freely renounced the spirit of the world and embraced the spirit of Christ. This was expressed in the baptismal vows. However, the greater cause of this radical differentiation between the clergy and laity is presented by Kunnumpuram as having started from Europe at the beginning of the Middle Ages:

But at the beginning of the Middle Ages mass conversions and a large-scale expansion of the Church took place in England, Germany, etc. A king would decide that his kingdom was to become Christian, and all the people of the kingdom would be baptized. There was no proper instruction in the Christian faith and, as a result, no real personal decision on the part of the people to accept Christianity. They could not, then, be said to have renounced the spirit of the world and embraced the spirit of Christ. Hence, the opinion came to prevail that the boundary between the spirit of Christ and the spirit of the world was the ‘second baptism’. At first religious profession was looked upon as the second baptism. Hence, the monks were regarded as spiritual persons. Gradually this view changed, and ordination to the priesthood came to be thought of as the second baptism.²⁰

The idea here was to maintain purity of mind and body and the required credibility of the people of God, hence the consideration of the clergy to be spiritual and the laity to be carnal, worldly. There is no doubt that the cause of this was the mass conversion that never took time to initiate the members properly into the Christian way of life after Christ. The same mistake was made in Africa in the nature of conversion as treated earlier. It was under this situation that distinctions were made as Stephen of Tournai remarked:

¹⁸ Clement of Rome, “*The Letter to the Corinthians*”, Chapter 40 quoted in Kurien Kunnumpuram SJ, *Op. cit.*

¹⁹ In K. Kunnumpuram, *Op. cit.*, pp. 1-11.

²⁰ K. Kunnumpuram, *Ibid.*, pp. 1-11.

In one city and under one king there are two peoples whose difference corresponds to two sorts of life.... The city is the Church; her king is Christ; the two peoples are the two orders of clergy and laity; the two sorts of life are the spiritual and the fleshly...²¹.

Within the same period in the historical progress of the Church, to stabilize leadership and administration in the communities of the faithful, leaders were becoming celibate and clergy. This was a major concern in the fourth century “that all community leaders should assume a celibate life-style”²². This new development was backed up with a historical biblical reference: it was grounded in the memory of Jesus’ unmarried status, it was also related to the metaphor of the leader as priest (which attached with it the suggestions of a special purity required for the handling of community’s sacred rites). We should add also that hostility towards sexuality was prevalent during this century²³. Following this new principle for the protection of religious leaders, after the Synod of Elvira in Spain in 309 to the Synod of Carthage in North Africa in 390, married community leaders (priests) were requested to abstain from sexual intercourse so as to be faithful to their vocation. “For the first time the Sacraments of priesthood and marriage seemed to be in conflict, but gradually, celibacy replaced abstinence as the ordinary expectation of the formal ministry. In the Second Lateran Council of 1139, celibacy was finally and officially promulgated as a requirement for community leadership /priesthood”²⁴.

It was during the third and the fourth century that Christians began to distinguish their leaders (the clergy) from the rest, through such words as “*laymen*” “*lay*” and “*laity*” which gradually gained ground in the ecclesia language²⁵. “Influenced by the society eager to distinguish different strata of excellence and privilege, the Church defined its leaders as belonging to a special status”²⁶. During this period, Josse Clichtove developed a theology and spirituality of the priesthood where he presented the image of a priest as that of a man who by virtue of his state of life was “detached from the world, even from

21 Prologue to the *Summa Super Decreta*, in Mirbt, *Quellen Zur Geschichte des Papstums*, n. 318, as quoted by Congar, *Op. cit.*, p. 13.

22 J. Whitehead & E. Eaten (eds.), *The Emergency Laity – Returning Leadership to the Community of Faith*, London: Doubleday Press, 1988, p. 145.

23 *Ibid.*, pp. 145-146.

24 *Ibid.* p. 146.

25 A.U. Gabriel & D.D. Dodo, “*The Role of the Layperson in the Church in Nigeria*”, Nigeria : Kaduna, 1985, pp. 33-45.

26 J. Whitehead & E. Eaten (eds.), *Op. cit.*, p. 146.

the world of the Christian laity”.²⁷. To maintain this distinction, a special habit (soutan) was prepared for the clergy. However, Pope Celestine in 428, vehemently resisted this social differentiation, which has no bearing from the life-style of Christ. He made this known to a bishop who was introducing special clothes for the Monks, as he remarked: “we should be distinguished from others, not by our dress but by our knowledge, by our conversation, and by our manner of life”²⁸.

Progressively in the life of the early Christian community, special images of the community’s structure emerge. Whitehead regards such image as “*the metaphors of hierarchy*”.²⁹ This was made possible due to societal influences of that time. Vertical images of the society were strong in the cultural setting of early Christianity. The cultural experience of the Roman Empire reinforced this vertical image (of being lifted up in order to serve) as a portrait of real time itself. “In the fifth century, a writer referred to as “Pseudo-Dionysius” introduced the word “hierarchy” into the Church’s discussion of ministry”³⁰.

During this period of internal restructuring of the Church, there developed “a gradual acceptance of the idea that the clergy had Christ-given power to fulfill certain functions. Till the 12th Century, the Church held a sacramental, iconological view of ministry”³¹. This was the theology that presented the clergy (Pope, the Bishops and the priests) as “Vicar of Christ”, meaning that Christ is present and active in his ministers. This was with a view to presenting the active involvement of God and the celestial powers in the earthly sphere. With this traditional presentation, “a ‘possession-of-power theory’ came to prevail”. This theory maintained that “Christ at the beginning gave power to his vicar, that is, to “a representative who takes his place and who hands on to those who came after him, in a historical sequence of transmission and succession, the power thus received”³². What this means is that Jesus Christ bestowed his power on the apostles (particularly Saint Peter) who, eventually, transmitted it to the Pope, who shares in

27 J. Clichtove (1472-1543), writing on *Prehistory*, quoted in E. Schillebeeckx, The Church with a Human Face, A New and Expanded Theology of Ministry, New York: Crossroad Press, 1985, pp. 195-197.

28 Cf. J. Whitehead, *Op. cit.*, p. 146.

29 *Ibid.*, p. 144.

30 *Ibid.*, p. 144.

31 Cf. Y. Congar, Power and Poverty, London: Geoffrey Chapman Press, 1964, p. 62.

32 Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 62.

collegiality with the Bishops who, in their turn, share it with the priests and the deacons. Reacting on this, Joseph Neuner says:

Thus leadership in the Church is seen no longer as a participation in Christ's mission for the realization of God's reign, but as a power and competence given to a group of people, the hierarchy, to rule the community of the faithful in analogy to a secular government.... Luther's revolt is not primarily a theological challenge of traditional doctrines but a revolution against the domination of the Christian people through the clergy in a spirit totally alien to Jesus Christ.³³

No wonder then the clergymen, till today, in spite of all intervention of the Vatican II as we shall see, still have more influence over the laity in Church's administration, as Whitehead would put it, they become "all things to all men"³⁴. All these historical changes, that presented the leader as a priest, a celibate, a cleric, etc., helped in giving the clergy some societal influence over the laity.

The hierarchical structure envisaged was perhaps in consonance with the societal demand of that time and was placed in the whole range of its need in relation to the broader communities of the faithful. Nevertheless, human beings being what they are, such elevated position, no doubt, did attract to itself some unprecedented uncontrolled display of authority.

Thus, it was not surprising to hear that with the bishop, the presbyter and the deacon, the functions of healing and preaching, prophesying and the ministering to the communities gradually became the priority of the three roles of leadership as from the second to the fifth centuries. Through this process, the ministry of prophecy began to disappear and almost all other functions shared by the members became coalesced into the authority role of the bishop of the cultural zone. At this juncture, Whitehead adds:

From the second to the fifth centuries, Christians increasingly expected the overseer or bishop to possess a whole range of ministerial gifts. With the expansion of Christianity in the third and fourth centuries, the bishop's role evolved from that of local pastor to become that of regional administrator. As this happened, elders stepped into the role of local community leader. Deacons were for a time, active members of this leadership constellation, serving as delegates of the pastor in handling, for example, a community's practical questions of health care and financials. But the role of deacon quickly withered along with the variety of

33 J. Neuner, "Exploring Global Dimensions of Jesuit Priestly Apostolate", in *Ignis Studies* 2, 1983, pp. 12-13.

34 J. Whitehead, *Op. cit.*, p. 143.

different ministries in the community, as the community leader came to absorb into his role the whole range of ministries.³⁵

This hierarchical structure was introduced for effective and orderly administration in the Church that was rapidly growing without taking into consideration its consequential effects as is realized today. This main outstanding function coupled with the others (administration, preaching, etc.) invested in the clergymen in the history of the Church, made them tend to neglect other charisms within the communities of the faithful as they see themselves higher above others – hence, the problem of hierarchy.

The apostles saw themselves as responsible for building up communities of the faithful and ensuring their continuing life. Their work to this end was a ministry, a service, a diakonia (Acts: 1:17, 25 25; 20; 24; Rom. 11: 3), which has to be shared with others in order that the Gospel spreads. Under the hierarchical structure as we saw in our analysis, “the Church is not conceived as a democratic or representative society, but as one in which the fullness of power is concentrated in the hands of a ruling class that perpetuates itself by cooption”³⁶. This version is clearly emphasised in the Council of Trent, which follows.

3. The teaching of the Council of Trent (1545-1563)

The idea of ‘being taken out of the world’, i.e., escape from the world, completely determines this image of the priest.... Priesthood is essentially defined by its relation with the cult (and not with the community), though this is the cult of the community. A priest, even a pastor, may have as little contact as possible even with his own parishioners, except for the necessary administration of the sacraments. To be a priest is to be a ‘cultic priest’. Precisely on the basis of this relation to the cult, the priest is the one who is set apart from the people, and priestly celibacy is the only adequate expression of this essential separation.³⁷

The above citation constituted the fruitful outcome of the decision of the Council of Trent. Trent laid great stress on the hierarchical structure of the Church, while totally

35 *Ibid.*, p. 143.

36 A. Dulles, Models of the Church, a critical assessment of the Church in all Aspects, Island: Macmillan Ltd.Press, 1989, p. 38.

37 Clichtove’s views on the cultic nature of the clergy disassociated from the people, as summarized by E. Schillebeeckx, The Church with a Human Face – A New and Expanded Theology of Ministry, *Op. cit.*, 1985, pp. 195-7.

ignoring the universal priesthood of the believers³⁸. “This Council in many ways contributed to the widening of the gap between the clergy and the laity”³⁹. While the reformers emphasize priestly tasks as preaching the word and pastoral care of the people, the Council of Trent doctrinal decrees, “define priesthood almost entirely in terms of presiding at the Eucharist (power of consecration) and administering the other sacraments”⁴⁰.

This is why we have chosen to treat the notion of *sacerdos* briefly in relation to the Council of Trent, as it had been a point of reference due to its emphasis on the powers of priesthood. In Vatican I, this term “*sacerdos*” was a mere reiteration of the decisions of the Council of Trent. Therefore, our main areas of concentration as far as our subject matter is concerned are going to be based on the Council of Trent and on Vatican II. The fact here is that the Council of Trent was set up to refute the errors of the Reformers. As Schillebeeckx observes:

Finally, the eight canons concerning the sacrament of ordination are a reaction against a view which reduces the priest to a preacher, spokesman and proclaimer (with the result that at least in defining the functions of the priest, the canons only stress his cultic activity, and so, do not say anything about the tasks of preaching and teaching, which were stressed so strongly by the Scripture and the early Church as the task of ministers of the Church).⁴¹

In dealing with the ordained ministry, the Council of Trent preferred to use the word “Priest” or “*sacerdos*” as it insists that the hierarchy (Bishops, priests and ministers) is instituted by Christ⁴². It made “priest” the centre by presenting its institutionalized and sacerdotalized nature (power, authority, sacramental and sacrificial). It affirmed that it has been the mind of God that there would always be priests⁴³. The logic here is that the Old Testament order of priesthood of Aaron is continued in the New Testament by Christ as he, at the Last Supper, instituted the ministry of priesthood by ordaining the apostles’ priests and entrusted to them the sacrifice of the Holy Eucharist. Vatican I affirmed the

38 Cf. J. Neuner-Dupuis, n. 1719 in Kunnumpuram, *Op.cit.*

39 Kunnumpuram, *Op.cit.*

40 J. Neuner-Dupuis, “*The Christian Faith*”, 6th ed. Bangalore: TPI 1996, n. 1714, quoted in Kunnumpuram, *Ibid.*

41 E. Schillebeeckx, *Op. cit.*, p. 200.

42 H. Denzinger and A. Schönmetzer, *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, 32nd ed. (Freiburg: Harder, 1963) – hereafter abbreviated DS, Nos. 1601 and 1775; NR, 413 and 637, in Avery Dulles, *Op. cit.*, p. 40.

43 D. Donovan, *Op. cit.*, p. 18.

same of the papal office.⁴⁴ In a schema on the Church prepared for Vatican I, we find this statement:

But the Church of Christ is not a community of equals in which all the faithful have the same rights. It is a society of unequals, not only because among the faithful some are clerics and some are laymen, but particularly because there is in the Church the power from God whereby to some it is given to sanctify, teach, and govern, and to others not⁴⁵.

According to Kunnupunam, “this draft was probably never discussed at the Council. Its only value lies in this, that it expresses the theology prevalent at that time”⁴⁶. Following the same logic, the dogma of the modern Church was affirmed to be part of the original deposit of faith, complete with the apostles⁴⁷. The reason was partly due to the defensive and polemical nature of the Council of Trent’s task. Speaking on this, Donovan notes:

It was instructed by the papal delegates not to attempt a full of the topic but simply to affirm those elements of the Catholic tradition, which Luther and the other reformers had denied. This included the sacrificial character of the ordination, the sacrificial of the mass, and the priestly understanding of the ministry⁴⁸.

While the Catholic Church insists on the ministerial priesthood, Luther’s emphasis was on the universal priesthood of all the baptised Christians in participation to the unique priesthood of Christ. He, and even more, Calvin, recognized the essence of ministry in the *ecclesia* community. Their insistence was that this function be geared primarily towards teaching and preaching. As regards the office of “priesthood”, Luther argued its absence in the New Testament maintaining that priesthood is only related to Christ and no other person. As it were, their argument was geared towards playing down the ministerial role of the ordained which was to the extreme as a theologian. To buttress their point of view, the reformers made reference to 1 Peter 2: 4-10, a text that is not quoted by Trent.

With the renewal of historical scholarly criticism, “the Catholics were made aware of the one-sidedness of Trent’s formulations at the expense of the laity and the ambiguity

44 *Ibid.*, p. 40.

45 Cf. As quoted by A. Dulles, *Op. cit.*, p. 35.

46 K. Kunnumpuram, *Op. cit.*, pp. 1-11.

47 *Ibid.*, pp. 1-11.

48 D. Donovan, *Op. cit.*, pp. 4 & 5.

of the traditional emphasis given to the priestly category”⁴⁹. It was clearly difficult to demonstrate that the above offices, beliefs and rites were instituted by Christ; many theologians were even blaming the Bishops of Trent for neglecting the polemical response to the reformers⁵⁰. To establish the original source of the Trent’s usage of the terms, Dulles has this to add:

As it became increasingly clear that Scholarly criticism could not demonstrate that all these offices, beliefs and rites were instituted by Christ, theologians were urged to study the original sources using what is called the “regressive method”— i.e., utilising the latest teaching of the *magisterium* as an indication of what must have been present from the beginning since the Church at this period disclaimed any power of innovation in the teaching of revelation. In this conception, “the noblest office of theology” was thought to be, in the phrase used by Pius IX and Pius XII, “to show how a doctrine defined by the Church is contained in the sources of Revelation”⁵¹.

The theologians as it were, following Dulles’s insight as they were meant to appraise the current teaching of the *magisterium*, in consolidation of faith, prepared the way for further doctrinal development. But what is certain is that theology itself was thus drawn into the institutional⁵² tradition that the Church adopted. Nevertheless, the essence of the Council of Trent still remains as it gave a solid foundation from which reference the Church advances in its doctrinal teaching (in this case) by ameliorating the use of priesthood today.

Talking about the priesthood and the African Synod, Bishop Onaiyekan presents the importance of the “pre-Vatican” (Council of Trent and Vatican I) heritage in relation to its theological improvement, when he says:

The pre-Vatican heritage is very important for our discussion on the priesthood. This is because, although a lot of water has passed under the bridge, the bridge is still here and there has been no essential change in the doctrinal discipline of the priesthood in the Church. The pre-Vatican Council II doctrinal principles are not only a point of departure for a process of reform that has gone a long and still continuing. Those principles are also the point of reference for the theological discussions and development

49 *Ibid.*, pp. 4 & 5.

50 Cf. M.I. Richard, *A people of Priests*, [London, 1995].

51 A. Dulles. *Op. Cit.*, p. 40. (Cf. Pius XII, *Humani Generis* (1950), No. 36; DS, 3886, with reference to Pius IX, *Inter Gravissimas*, 1870.

of the last quarter of a century. What the Church has been doing these past years is to renew, not replace the priesthood⁵³.

For Onaiyekan, “the pre-Vatican II heritage is by its nature, the result of previous developments in the historical concept of the priesthood and the way it has been exercised in the Church for the sake of the world”⁵⁴. In this heritage, we have “the basic profile of a “man chosen from among men”, (Heb. 5:1) consecrated for a holy office, equipped with sacred powers exclusive to the priesthood”⁵⁵. As he argued, “all this is conferred on the priest through the sacrament of the Holy Orders which carries with it a permanent special spiritual configuration to Jesus, called a priestly character”⁵⁶. Thus, an ordained “is privileged to carry the title of *alter Christus* i.e. “another Christ”. He is acknowledged both as a “man of God” and “an official of the Church”, with rights and duties, privileges and obligations deriving therefrom”⁵⁷.

Bishop Onaiyekan is right to some extent by pointing out the fact that the role of an ordained minister in the Church is clear and definite and that its theological impute in the Church’s doctrine is basic. But still, we have a lot of theological views on the use of the term, “common priesthood”, in the light of Vatican II, have been presented, both for and against the Trent’s conception. However, arguing in the same line as Onaiyekan, Dulles re-emphasizes the sacral aspect of priesthood in these words:

In Roman Catholicism today we are witnessing a full-scale revolt against the excesses of the sacral concept of ministry. Rejection of this stereotype is one of the sources of the present crisis in the Church. Still there are valid elements in this controverted view... As a focal centre for the community the priest must visibly be a sign and sacrament of Christ. Catholicism has perhaps a special responsibility to keep alive this sacral dimension⁵⁸.

The problem of priesthood with a view to accommodating the role of the laity in reference to Vatican II has gone to the extent of dividing the opinion of theologians into two parts: the traditional sacral model as demonstrated by bishop Onaiyekan, and the contemporary model which understands priesthood “as a ministry of leadership in the

53 J. Onaiyekan, “*The Priesthood and the African Synod*” in Luke Mbefor & Ernest Ezeogu (editors), *The Clergy in Nigeria Today* – SIST Symposium Series no. 3., Nigeria-Enugu: Snaap’s Press, 1994, p. 82.

54 *Ibid.*, p.82.

55 *Ibid.*, p. 82.

56 *Ibid.*, p. 82.

57 *Ibid.*, p. 82.

58 A. Dulles, *Op. cit.*, pp. 158-159.

ecclesial community”⁵⁹. This is borne out of the fact that traditional notion of an ordained minister in the Catholic faith after the mind of the Council of Trent, has been called into question as it marginalized the role and the spirituality of the laity. This conception of a special ordained priest regarded as a sacred person set aside and having special powers, acting as “another Christ” (*alter Christus*), as Onaiyekan rightly described above, was being questioned by some theologians.

This critical analysis of the traditional conception came with full force after the Vatican II Council. The rejection of the sacral view of priesthood was made more explicit by Hans Küng when he noted: “the term ‘priest’ should be dropped as specific and exclusive terms to identify people who have ministries in the Church, since according to the New Testament view, all believers are ‘priests’”⁶⁰. In the first half of the 20th century there was a lot of talk about “Catholic action”. Both Pius XI and Pius XII spoke enthusiastically about it. And Catholic action was described as the collaboration of the laity in the apostolate of hierarchy.⁶¹ What has actually given rise to such probing into the traditional sacral priesthood as to the extent of raising dust in the historical teaching of the Church? The ambiguity of the Council of Trent perhaps may not help us much here. Vatican II will throw more light to this problem of institutionalism and clericalism in the Church.

4. The teaching of Vatican II

The influence of the pre-Vatican II Council with regard to the human relationship was getting stronger and stronger that people began to suggest the need to formulate or improve the identity of laity in relation to the clergy in view of what used to be in the earlier councils. “One of those people, Joseph Cardinal Roncalli, eventually became a Pope, with the name of John XXIII. In his brief years of reign as Pope (1956-63), he started a programme of “*aggiornamento*” or ‘up-dating’ of the Church, leading to the convocation of the second Vatican Council in 1962”⁶². The teaching of the Council gave

59 Cited examples are: E. Schillebeeckx *Ministry: Leadership in the community of Jesus Christ*, New York: Crossroad, 198; Hans Küng, *Why priesthood? A Proposal for the New Church Ministry*, Garden City, N.Y: Double day, 1974, p. 42 in Thomas P. Rausch, S.J. *Priesthood Today: an appraisal*, New York: Paulist Press, 1992., p. 14.

60 Hans Küng, *Op. cit.*, New York: Doubleday Press, 1974, p. 42

61 As quoted by A. Dulles, *Op. cit.* p. 40. Also in Vatican II, *AA*, n. 20.

62 J. Onaiyekan, *Op. cit.*, p. 83.

a new face, a new era in the history of the Church, especially on the notion of common priesthood of the faithful. The main terms brought forward for discussion by Pope John XXIII when the Council was convoked were: the internal renewal of the Church, improvement in relation with separated brethren (the spirit of ecumenism) and the more effective pastoral impact on the world of our day⁶³ in relation to the cultural life of the people. Our concentration here will be on the nature of clergy-laity relationship which was given adequate attention as it aimed at correcting the notion of the Council of Trent as we had it above. We shall discuss this under these two subheadings: (1) Participation in Christ's threefold function (priest, prophet and king) to show that the clergy and the laity belong to one body of Christ, irrespective of their special charisms, and (2) the ministerial and common priesthood.

4.1 Participation in Christ's threefold functions (priest, prophet and king)

The threefold function of Christ is made central in the ecclesiology of Vatican II in relation to the people of God, the clergy and the laity. For the Council the favoured image of the Church was the "People of God" who are called to participate in the pastoral life of Christ as priest, prophet and king according to their charisms. Saint Paul tells us that our Lord has established ministers among his faithful to unite them together in one mystical body in which, "not all the members have the same function" (Rom 12:4). And the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church devoted a whole chapter to it.⁶⁴ The People of God includes all the believers. These are the Pope, the Bishops, the priests and the lay faithful. "The state of this people is that of the dignity and freedom of the children of God, in whose hearts the Holy Spirit dwells as in a temple"⁶⁵ These three points, as it were, summarized all that the Council intended for priesthood. Vatican II makes the faithful understand that in the Church, all are equal. There is also a reference in *Lumen Gentium* that the pilgrim people of God may at times be the "wandering people" of God.⁶⁶ It presented this thus:

63 John XXIII, *Apostolic Constitution "Humanae Salutis"* for the Convocation of the Second Vatican Council, 1962, p. 5-13. See also the Pope's discourse of the solemn opening of the Council 11/10/62 AAS 54, 1962, p. 785-795 in J. Onaiyekan, *Ibid.*, p. 83.

64 Cf. *LG* Chapter II in K. Kunnumpuram, *Op. cit.*

65 Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, n. 9.

66 Cf. *LG*, n. 9.

And if by the will of Christ some are made teachers, dispensers of the mysteries, and shepherds on behalf of others, yet all share a true equality with regard to the dignity and to the activity, which is common to all the faithful for the building up of the Body of Christ⁶⁷.

The faithful may belong to different states of life. They may be called upon to fulfill diverse functions. And yet, all are equal with regard to the dignity and the mission, which are common to all the faithful. For Vatican II, the notion of the people of God involves a union through the body and blood of Christ that unites all the members. It states:

For the distinction, which the Lord made between sacred ministers and the rest of the People of God involves, union, for pastors and the other faithful are joined together by a close relationship.... Thus in their diversity all bear witness to the admirable unity of the Body of Christ⁶⁸.

However, in view of the union of the members of the Church, it was the intention of the Council “to evolve a deepened understanding of the priesthood in their personal identity within the Church, open to dialogue with others outside the Church, and to be capable of dealing with new challenges of contemporary humanity”⁶⁹.

In an effort to improve the notion of Trent, Vatican II in its ecclesiology, uses the threefold function (priest, prophet and king) of Christ as manifested in his ministry. The priest role as a cult official in the catholic notion is of presiding over the Eucharistic celebration within the community of believers. He leads the community in addressing itself to God. The prophet, on the other hand, is the one through whom God’s word is addressed to the community⁷⁰. Emphasis of the prophetic priesthood is the proclamation of the word of God. By virtue of baptism, all the Christians (called children of God) share in the kingly function of Christ. Michael Richards at this point, has this to say in relation to the three fold function of Christ:

Christ did not in his teaching establish a link between the Apostles and the public functionaries of the Old Testament, the prophet, priest and king. The traditional roles of these guides and rulers of Israel were under the New Testament drawn together and exercised by Christ himself, as a single living synthesis in his own person. The titles thus become applicable to all that ‘in Christ’ are members of his Body, whether ordained or not⁷¹.

67 *Ibid.*, n. 32.

68 *Ibid.*, n. 32.

69 J. Onaiyekan, *Op. cit.*, pp. 83-84.

70 T., P. Rausch, *Op. cit.*, P. 83.

71 M. Richards, *A People of Priests*, London: University Press, 1988, pp. 92-93.

It is important to note that the Vatican Council used these categories to provide a threefold classification of the work of Christ and of his ordained representatives⁷². Actually, the three functions were certainly spoken of and expounded by the New Testament writers and the Fathers and the Scholastics, but the titles were not so systematically grouped together. Reference to the threefold office came into theology through John Calvin and was taken up by Lutheran scholars in the seventeenth century. Catholic theologians began to use the theme of the threefold office at the end of the eighteenth century⁷³.

One important factor to point out here is that the use of these titles helped the Council to provide a broader and more embracing doctrine of the ordained ministry in the Church. The concentration is no longer limited to the cult of Eucharistic celebration that excludes or plays down on other aspects of ministries, but tries to accommodate them by the use of “common priesthood” of all the faithful. However, the terminology notion of the threefold function of Christ, depicting him as a prophet, priest and king is not always the same, nor is the order of the titles. “Teacher is sometimes used for prophet, and pastor or shepherd for king. As applied to Christ, the titles are traditional and can be found in various juxtapositions in both the patristic and the medieval periods”⁷⁴.

Around the eighteenth century, these terms were applied by Catholic theologians to office in the Church, a practice that was followed by both Pius XI and Pius XII. The Council tried to present the common denominator of the three functions as “service” by “formulating both the dignity and the role of the laity and to the distinctive nature of the ordained ministry”⁷⁵.

Granted that the importance was given to the triad function of Christ to show the participation of all the baptised in the ecclesiastical set up as it is manifested in different perspectives, generally what predominates was the “common priesthood” as seen in the constitution of the liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* that demonstrates the role of all the faithful who are baptised in Christ.

72 Cf. L.G. nn. 20, 25-28, and 34-36.

73 M. Richard, *Op. cit.*, p. 93.

74 D. Donovan, *Op. cit.*, p. 5.

75 *Ibid.*, p. 5.

Added to this is the document *Presbyterorum Ordinis* that concentrates on the decree concerning the ministry and the life of priests. It is noted that the Post-Conciliar agenda had already been set before the final forum of this document. However, in the process of *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, many title changes and shifts were made in relation to priesthood: originally called *de Clericalibus* (on clerics) to become *de Sacerdotibus* (on priests), then *de vital et ministerio Sacerdotium* (on the life and ministry of priests), and finally *de Presbyterorum ministerio et Vita* (on the ministry and life of Presbyters)⁷⁶. From these documents (*Sacrosanctum Concilium* and *Presbyterorum Ordinis*), we discover that what is very significant is the conception of “ministry”. The deliberating Bishops laid emphasis on ministry as service. But, how is the issue of ministerial and common priesthood resolved?

4.2 Ministerial and common priesthood

With the Vatican Council II, the Catholic theologians have been stressing the ministerial model of priesthood⁷⁷. Throwing more light on this, Rausch says:

Priesthood as a ministry of community leadership is not really a new idea; it has always been proposed; though its obvious meaning has frequently been lost sight of and covered over the secularising of the priesthood and the clericalizing of its order, which took place over so many centuries. We spoke of priests as ‘sacred ministers,’ but the emphasis was always on the word sacred, not on minister⁷⁸.

The Bishops of Vatican II were slow in emphasizing the use of 1 Peter, 2:4-10 that stresses on common priesthood of the faithful through Christ due to the fact that Luther used it as a background to reject the ministerial priesthood⁷⁹. However, they (the Bishops) used various ways to express the civic responsibility and dignity of all believers in respect to their participation in the common priesthood of the faithful. But their affirmation in the sharing in the priesthood of Christ carried particular historical and emotional overtones. It was probably for this reason that when the theme of the universal priesthood was first introduced in the Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium* (LG),

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁷⁷ R. M. Schwartz, *Servant Leader of the People of God*, New York: Paulist Press, 1989. Refer also to T. P. Rausch, S.J. *Op. cit.*, p. 22.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

⁷⁹ Cf. D. Donovan, *Op. cit.*, p. 7.

an effort was made immediately to distinguish it from, and to relate it to the *ministerial or hierarchical priesthoods*⁸⁰.

However, if we look at the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, the second chapter on “the people of God” speaks of the communal life shared by all the members of God’s people who, together in Christ, worship and bear witness to him. Specifically, *Lumen Gentium* stressed not only on the “common priesthood” of all the faithful, but also on the basic equality of dignity of each member of the community⁸¹. “Furthermore, the emphasis on the laity on one hand and on Bishops on the other seemed to leave little or no room or role for the priest as such”⁸². The assumption is that by the virtue of their posts, the Bishops, the episcopates, have the pastoral authority of the Church. The presbyters are joined with the bishop in his overseer of the Church and in the ministry of the word and the sacraments.

What is most important here, following the theological thoughts of *Presbyterorum Ordinis* and even the formulation in *Lumen Gentium* 28, is not to create two types of priesthood in the Church, but to demonstrate the functionality of the ministerial priesthood in relation to the community of the faithful where each person has his/ her charism and all of which are for common service. Perhaps, it was the intention of *Lumen Gentium* 10 to address the issue in terms of priesthood as a way of reflecting on the use of priestly language in the Council of Trent. But, the Post-Conciliar debates have shown that the concerns were not ungrounded⁸³. Some Bishops continued from this perspective by distinguishing the two types of priesthood, referring the common priesthood as “metaphorical” or “spiritual” or “initial” and this, no doubt, caused a big damage in the Church’s unity and collaboration between the clergy and the laity. Commenting on this, Kunnumpuram wrote:

There is one statement of the Council, which seems to reinforce the clergy-laity division. While dealing with the participation of the People of God in the priestly office of Christ, the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church maintains that the common priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial priesthood “differ essentially from one another and not only in degree” (*ibid.*, n. 10). On the face of it, this statement of the Council is rather strange. Why does it use such an apparently

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁸¹ *L.G.* nn. 9-17.

⁸² J. Onaiyekan, *Op. cit.*, p. 84.

⁸³ D. Donovan, *Op. cit.*, p. 7.

metaphysical language to distinguish what is really a functional difference in the community of salvation?⁸⁴

Kunnumpuran even quoted Aloys Grillmerier, who was a resourceful person (*peritus*) at Vatican II, as saying that what the Council meant to insist on was “the difference between the common and the special, hierarchical priesthood”⁸⁵. Moreover, various suggestions were made to help clarify this difference. As some opinions held that common priesthood should be regarded as an improper or initial (*inchoativum*) priesthood. While others motioned that common priesthood be named as “spiritual priesthood” to distinguish it from the official priesthood. But it was argued that the quality of being “spiritual” was common to both. And yet, some theologians suggested that it would be good to look upon the special priesthood as ‘sacramental’ and representative; while, the priesthood of the faithful, too, has a sacramental basis. Finally, it was stated that they differ essentially from one another and not only in degree (Cf. *LG*, n. 10). Reflecting on this statement of “essential difference” Grillmeier maintains the following view:

The Constitution does not claim to have found the definitive distinction. Its concern is to make a positive statement about the priesthood of the faithful while still keeping it apart from the consecrated priesthood.... The consecrated priesthood is not to be understood merely as intensification and heightening of the dignity and mission of the common priesthood, but represents a new type of priestly dignity and power, even though it is based on the common priesthood⁸⁶.

The point here is that the Vatican Council II rejected all the proposed distinctions as “inadequate and preferred to speak simply of the “common priesthood” as it recognizes its “ontological priority”⁸⁷. The point of reference to Christ and the ministerial priesthood is meant to animate, to foster and to nourish the common priesthood. Moreover the second section of *Lumen Gentium* 10 adds this:

Christ the Lord, high priest taken from among men (Cf. Heb. 5:1-5), made the new people “a kingdom of priests” to God His father (Apoc. 1:6: Cf. 5:9-10). Therefore, all the disciples of Christ, persevering in prayer and praising God (cf.

84 K. Kunnupuram, *Op. cit.*, p.5. See also A. Grillmeier, “Commentary on Chapter II,” in H. Vorgrimler, ed., *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, Vol. I, New York: Herder Press, 1967, pp. 156-159.

85 A. Grillmeier, *Op. cit.* pp. 156-159.

86. *Lumen Gentium* No. 10

87 D. Donovan, *Op. cit.*, p. 7.

Acts. 2:42-47), should present themselves as a sacrifice, living holy and pleasing to God (Cf. Rom. 12:1). They should everywhere on earth, bear witness to Christ and give an answer to everyone who asks a reason for the hope of eternal life, which is theirs (Cf. Peter, 3:15)⁸⁸.

The above citation helps to affirm that all the people of God are primarily priests who worship and pray together. Through this way, they all share in the “common priesthood” given to them by Christ. The second paragraph of this LG 10, gives a sort of commentary to clarify what matters the more as it emphasized on the unity in diversity of the people of God. It is the same priesthood where all must feel the same solidarity in Christ, which means that each person exercises this priesthood or Christian call according to one’s gifts since everyone is essentially different from everyone else.

It is Christ who is a unique high priest “in the full sense of the word”, and all other priesthood, baptised as well as ordained, participates in his priesthood. “Those who receive the sacrament of ordination find their priesthood given a special character, which distinguishes it from the priesthood of others by the responsibility they hold within God’s plan of salvation, not by any superimposed philosophical or sociological categories”⁸⁹. Vatican II cannot be fairly accused of institutionalism neither will it be totally exonerated from it.

The primary notion of the Church in Dogmatic Constitution, *Lumen Gentium*, is the mystery, the Sacrament, the body of Christ, translated as the people of God. On the two chapters devoted to the general theme, particularly in the third chapter, the Council, as seen above, discussed the formal structure of the Church government as a way of maintaining the tradition. The Council avoided the implications of jurisdiction and preferred systematically the ministry of Bishops to sacerdoce of one another. However, this does not mean that the Council solved all the difficulties that were foreseen. Were these principles easy to come by? Not at all, they rather revealed a lot of insight on what pre-occupied the theologians after the Conciliar document that gave a new understanding of the Church – the post-Conciliar that provoked further theological reflection on the conception of priesthood.

⁸⁸ M. Richards: *Op. cit.*, p. 55.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

5. The teaching of the Magisterium after Vatican II

The Post-Conciliar teaching continued with the theological challenges posed by the Council of Trent as it emphasized the sacerdotalism and the institutionalism. Sacerdotalism or clericalism is the term used to qualify the dominating spirit of the clergy in the Church at the expense of the laity. This is a situation where the clergy tends to reduce the function of the lay people in the Church to mere passivity and their apostolate is seen as an appendage to that of the hierarchy. The notion here is that the clergy is the source of all power, authority and administration of the Church. Institutionalism, as applied here, relates to the notion of the Church as a society, “as visible and palpable as the community of the Roman people, or the kingdom of France, or the Republic of Venice”⁹⁰. In this case, the Church is described analogically as it applies in a political society and it tends to highlight the structure of government as a formal element in the society that has rights and powers of governance. This shows that it has its recognized ministers, accepted confessional formulas and prescribed forms of public worship.

When we speak of Church as institution, do we mean the body of the community of believers who give witness of the word through the missionary empowerment of the risen Lord? Not at all! But by this, we refer to a set up organization of the community with its hierarchical structures, sacred powers, and traditions⁹¹. We also know that no organization can exist without some form of organized structural institution that helps to determine its unity, coherence and identity. Through the process of institutional organization, “the community responds to the needs: stability, identity, the spreading of the gospel, internal assistance, governance and so on”⁹². By institutionalism in the Church, therefore, we mean “a system in which the institutional element is treated as primary”⁹³. This means that its primary existence is for the service of the community of faith and not for its own motive. But unfortunately, from what we saw in our description, the Church as institution, instead of being characterized by enumerated qualities above: stability, sacrifice, maintenance of unity, etc., it rather turned to power which “became a

90 A. Dulles, *Op. cit.*, p.34, see also Bellarmine, who affirms that Church is a society: *De Controversiis*, tome 2, cap.2 Naples: Giuliano, 1857, vol. 2, p. 73.

91 Cf. G. Hasenhuttl, “*Church and Institution*” in G. Baum and A. Greeley (eds.), *Concilium - The Church as Institution*, 1974, p. 91.

92 L. Boff, *Church: Charism & Power – Liberation Theology and the Institutional Church*, New York: Crossroad Publication, 1985, p. 48.

93 Cf. A. Dulles, *Op. cit.*, p. 35. From the point of view of this author, institutionalism is a deformation of the true nature of the Church.

powerful temptation for domination and a substitution for God and Jesus Christ. This institution sclerosis has kept the Church from responding properly to the challenges of the modern world”⁹⁴ as power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely.

However, the Post-Conciliar teaching seems to have deviated from the thought of Trent to emphasize “*collegiality*” and to facilitate the spirit of the faithful in the Church’s activity. Bishop De Smith particularly criticised the juridical approach to the question of membership and called for a manner of speaking and thinking that exhibited the Church as being in the term used by Pope John XXIII, the “*loving mother of all*”. He spoke vehemently against the “pyramidal pattern of the Church in which all power is conceived as descending from the Pope through the Bishops and priests, while at the base of the faithful, people play a passive role and seem to have a lower position”⁹⁵. Surely, it left many problems unsolved and paved the way for further theological reflections on the issue of ministerial and common priesthood of the faithful, as we shall see in the Synod of 1971.

The Post-Conciliar period was regarded as an “unstable period” in the Church due to the unquiet mind of the theologians with regard to “ministerial priesthood”. By the late 1960s, in “many countries, it already seemed to be in a state of crisis. Vocations dropped, some priests left for active ministry, while many others underwent what at the time was referred to as an identity crisis”⁹⁶ that involved examination of vocation and theological elements. This was intensified within the period of 1970s and 1980s. This development really provoked a reaction in the magisterium. Two things were out-standing: (1) the 1971 Synod and (2) the contribution of John Paul II. And as earlier mentioned, we shall conclude our theological discussion with the insight of an Igbo theologian, which will constitute our third aspect here.

5.1 The Synod of 1971

One of the discoveries made by the Synod is the one-sided enthusiasm in the post-conciliar period for the “common-priesthood teachings which” gave rise, as by a swing of the pendulum, to certain questions which seem to obscure the position of the priestly

94 L. Boff, *Op. cit.*, p. 48.

95 A. Dulles, *Op. cit.*, p. 39.

96 D. Donovan, *Op. cit.*, p. 21.

ministry in the Church in relation to the laity. People were asking: “does the priestly ministry have any specific nature? Is the priesthood incapable of being lost? Would it not be enough to have for the service of Christian communities, presidents designated for the preservation of the common good, without sacramental ordination exercising their office for a period?”⁹⁷. As the focus on the pastoral as a unifying factor the ordained ministry disappeared, in preference to “common priesthood”, the Synod laid a strong emphasis on the priestly category to counterbalance with the former⁹⁸. However, it cited and reinforced the emphasis of Vatican II on preaching and on evangelization.

The Synod, in responding to the crisis of the priesthood with regards to priestly vocation in this context, made reference to the traditional responsibilities of priests in the administration of word and sacrament and by underlining the uniqueness of the gifts that differentiate them from others through ordination. It stressed their identity in the ministry of Christ who is the head of the Church. An ordained priest stands always on the side of Christ in discharging his duties in the community.

5.2 John Paul II

The traditional position on priests and their identity and ministry, constituted the main feature of Pope John Paul’s speeches and letters to priests and Bishops in the course of his pastoral trips and Holy Thursday letters. Pertinently enough, he highlighted the fact that secularisation is gradually undermining the priest’s position in the world today and “particularly laments the tendencies to interpret Vatican II’s call, the “*aggiornamento*”, in terms of a breaking down of differences between the ordained and the laity”⁹⁹.

The Holy Father, discussing the issue of priesthood, insisted on the Tridentine notion of its institution by Christ at the Last Supper. Hence, in his letters, he made repetitive references to the Holy Thursday as the “feast of priests” or the “birthday of the priesthood”. Such references as “*sacerdos*”, *sacerdotalis*, priestly life, priestly ministry, priestly vocation, personality and existence of priesthood, were made. Through the sacrament of ordination, a priest shares in a unique way in the priesthood of Christ. The

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

sacrament “imprints” on the priest’s soul the mark of an indelible character”¹⁰⁰. He maintained that the laity can never substitute the role of a priest in Eucharistic celebration. This, he demonstrated with a community of believers who lacked a priest as they were engaged in prayer but could not go further when it was time for “transubstantiation”:

And sometimes it happens that they meet in an abandoned shrine and place on the altar, a stole...and recite all the prayer of the Eucharistic liturgy; and then, at the moments that corresponds to the transubstantiation, silence comes down upon them, a silence sometimes broken by a sob so ardently do they desire to hear words only the lips of a priest can efficaciously utter. So if one of you doubts the meaning of his priesthood, or if he is socially fruitless or useless, reflect on this¹⁰¹.

The Holy Father, Pope John Paul II used the above words to strengthen the vocation of priesthood that should not be replaced. As a theologian, he made references to *Presbyterorum Ordinis* and *Lumen Gentium* that dwelt on priestly vocation by asserting the clear “difference essentially and not only in degree that should exists between the “common priesthood” and the “ministerial or hierarchical priesthood”¹⁰². For John Paul II, the view of priesthood is *Christo-centric*. A priest is another Christ (alter Christus) who acts in the name and the person of Jesus Christ (Persona Christi).

Here, the Pope was reacting against the process of secularization in western culture and against the corresponding tendencies in the Church to laicize or undermine the sacred character of the ordained. Catholic contribution to ecumenical dialogues as well as efforts at Church renewal after the Council, tended to appeal to the pastoral dimension of the ministry and to break down what was thought to be the excessive separation of the priest from the life and situation of the people, it is meant to serve¹⁰³. Efforts were actually made to reduce and to undermine the sacral character of priesthood as Daniel Donovan remarked, and thereby, “reducing the priest both theologically and sociologically to the state of the laity”¹⁰⁴.

100 An English translation of the Holy Thursday letters and reflections is available both in pamphlet form and in *Origins* (1978), 696-704 in D. Daniel., *Op. cit.*, p. 27.

101 Pope John Paul II uses the phrase “essentially and not only in degree” often in 1979 where he re-emphasizes the role of priest as a “*Persona Christi*”.

102 *Ibid.*

103 D. Donovan, *Op. cit.*, pp. 30-31.

104 *Ibid.*, p. 31.

Pope John Paul II maintains that ministerial priesthood “does not take its origin from the community, as though it were the community that called or delegated it. The sacramental priesthood is truly a gift for the community and comes from Christ himself, from the fullness of his priesthood”¹⁰⁵. The Pope’s stand is that a minister has a vital function to perform in the community of the faithful and his vocation is to serve the Church in the name of Christ. In the ecclesial set up, each person has his/her charisms and these are not the same, but all are meant for the service of the Church.

In actual fact, these ideas, as highlighted by the Holy Father, were the main bases for the Synod of 1990, which was centred on the formation of “priesthood” in the light of the contemporary situation. The Post-Synodal Exhortation, *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (PDV) reconfirmed the essential points of Vatican II and, by so doing, projected further relevant theological models that clarify further the nature of priesthood. It does this by presenting it under three headlines: Trinitarian, Christological and ecclesiological perspectives. In the Trinitarian dimension, the argument is that Christ is sent by the father and continued through the animation of the Holy Spirit that enables the priest to be what he is¹⁰⁶. Christologically, the priesthood is essentially related to Christ the Head and Shepherd, the only high priest who chose the apostles and empowered them to act in his name and to have successors¹⁰⁷. Finally is the ecclesiological, the domain of which the function of a priest is determined. The Synod asserts that a priest is not only in the Church (in ecclesia), but also facing the Church¹⁰⁸. By implication, this Synod reiterates the Vatican II notion of “common ministerial priesthood of Bishops and priests, who are applied in the second degree”¹⁰⁹. The general view here is that ministerial priesthood should not be laicized since its function in the society is indispensable – as animator and nourisher of souls. But, by the virtue of his call, he has to work in collaboration with the laity as Christ’s representative and ought to see his function as a service within the Christian community. With this in mind, let us consider the opinion of an Igbo theologian as our close guide here.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, n. 12.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. *Ibid.*, n. 13-15.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. *Ibid.*, no. 16.

¹⁰⁹ J. Onaiyekan, *Op. cit.*, pp. 88-89.

5.3. Eugene Uzukwu

It is important to note that Professor Uzukwu is not directly associated with the magisterial discussions as presented above. However, indirectly, his ideas are presented here, realizing the need for such contributions in our thesis. He is strongly considered at this point because his ideas will help tailor the above discussions to our contextual level, Igboland of Nigeria in particular and Africa in general.

Generally, within this epoch, the problem that prevails in Europe and North America in relation to pastoral activities is lack of vocation. And this leads to the argument of considering the laity to handle some of the functions that are proper for the clergy, such as “nominating lay ministerial leaders” in such areas considered as basic community zones that lack priests. This is not always the case in many parts of Africa, like Igboland, where there are still vocations to the priesthood and religious life. Thus, the main problem in Africa and particularly in Igboland as we saw earlier, is more of administrative management due to the nature of ecclesiology that lacks proper inculturation. Based on this, Professor Uzukwu, CSSp, an Igbo theologian, in his recent textbook that deals with “*Autonomy and Communion in African Churches*”, calls for “*A Listening Church*” (which is also the title of the book) with large ears as we move into a third millennium. We must take the search for the meaning of the Church as family out of the realm of speculation into the real world of pastoral concern¹¹⁰. Father Uzukwu regards the situation as being unfortunate “as our life as Church in the Southern Nigeria society has not proven a positive source of change”. While the clergy and religious have the chances of undergoing a long period of formation, the members of the laity are less fortunate. They are limited to the catechism, memorized to qualify for baptism, confirmation, and to receive Holy Communion¹¹¹. In his thought, Uzukwu did not deviate from the observations of the afore-mentioned theologians, especially, from the point of view of letting down on the role of the laity which, up till this point, seems not to be the priority of the clergy in Igboland. To understand him well, we need to refer to his

110 E. E. Uzukwu, *The Listening Church – autonomy and communion in African Churches* (New York: Orbis-Maryknoll, 1996, in Fr. C. N. Etokudoh, (unpublished paper) “The Church’s Mission in “*Nigeria Beyond the year 2000*” - A Paper presented at the Bi-Annual Meeting of the Association of Nigerian Priests in Belgium on the 24th April, 1998.

111 See, Uzukwu, *Ibid*.

powerful article during the African Synod of 1994 on the deficiency of religious leadership in Africa.

E. Uzukwu¹¹², in his article, *“The Birth and Development of the Local Church”*, advises the Fathers of the Synod concerning their leadership role in the African Church. For him, the problem of poor collaboration among the clergy and laity is caused by the leadership role. He remarked: “the Church in Africa has to go one step further by reforming its leadership structures”¹¹³. E. Uzukwu tries to illustrate this with what exists in Igbo tradition and the early Christian Church: leadership was also the nature of ministry/administration in the early Churches of the New Testament. He remarked: “no matter how centralized a New Testament Church might have been, feudalistic structures were unheard of. The Church in Africa should allow itself and its patterns of ministry to be influenced both by Africa’s traditional political systems of administration and by the New Testament experience”. In view of practical experiences, he regrets, “instead of the Church’s mission of service (Matt: 10:45) that equips it to introduce change into society at the grassroots, because of its outmoded command structure, it risks becoming but a spectator in the present drama of life in Africa”¹¹⁴.

Making reference to family ecclesia, Uzukwu continued by insisting that “Church in Africa has to map out a new cause of relationship in reference to leadership style that should suite the Church-as-family model”¹¹⁵. For Uzukwu, the understanding of the collaborative activity of the clergy and laity depends more on human relationship that is realizable within the Church-as-family of God through a proper coordination of the leaders. By adopting the model of the Church-as-family, the Igbo Church in particular, challenges itself to an examination of conscience on how to deal with one another within the same family. It is an appeal to conscience, especially to the leaders of the Church, to review their inherited traditional fundamental option of disregarding the lay people as true members of God’s family. As it were, “the Church is pushed to review its model of

112 E.E. Uzukwu, *“Birth and Development of the Local Church – difficulties and signs of hope”* in M. Browne (ed.), *The African Synod, Documents, Reflections, Perspectives*, New York: Maryknoll, Orbis Books, 1996, pp. 1-13.

113 Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 5.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.13.

115 *Ibid.*, p. 5.

leadership and self-identity. For if the Church should be the family of God, the picture of the clergy and the episcopate in Igboland in must be different”¹¹⁶.

6. Reappraisal points

We have gradually come to the end of our theological historical exposition in relation to the significance of “priesthood” and “communal participation” in the Church, the problem of clergy-laity collaboration in relation to ecclesiology. From the above discussion, we are able to deduct some relevant points:

The concentration of the Church is a theological entity with God at the centre through the influence of the Holy Spirit that guides the community.

Highlighting on the pastoral authority and power of Jesus, all of the above theological thoughts share the view that what is distinctive about his mission is that he exercises it as a service, a *diakonia* for the salvation of humanity. Thus, the view of ministry as leadership within the concept of *diakonia*, is rooted in Jesus Christ himself who took the role of a servant.

The issue with the early community Christians was not just a matter of creating or installing new ministries, but of confiding certain ministries that were considered urgent and needed for the service and the up-going of different communities:

- Attention was focused on the mutual services of the members towards one another and on the subordination of particular good of any one group to that of the whole community.

- The Church was seen as a community of people who were individually free to take up functions in relation to their individual gifts (charisms) for the service of humanity.

- As ministries were shared, all members were actively involved in the realization of God’s kingdom on earth. Suffice it to say that the face of Christ is resplendently present when all the members participate actively and selflessly in respect of their divergent charisms and calls. Gifts, made up of leadership and administration, of preaching and teaching, of helping and healing, of conjugal love and devoted service, were being utilised for the propagation of the faith.

116 Cf. H. Peter, SYMBOL, Reflection on African Theology, in the “Roman New Times”, Vatican Publication, 1994, p. 183.

The notion of priesthood as being hierarchical and cultic rather than emphasizing the prophetic and pastoral aspects, has its origin from the theology of priesthood, which emerged officially from the Council of Trent and constitutes the main factor of the problem of clergy-laity collaboration. The basis for this teaching was Saint Thomas Aquinas who defined priesthood in terms of its sacramental power, a “*sacra potestas*” which emphasis was on the priest’s cultic role rather than his aspect of relation to the particular ecclesial community. However, Aquinas did not ignore the aspect of prophetic role that is attached in teaching but he rather treats it along with confession and studies it in his articles on religious life in the *Summa theologiae*¹¹⁷. One could say that he presumed the teaching as being part and parcel of religious orders like his own, though respectful of the bishop’s authority in his diocese. His failure to treat the aspect of participation and collaboration on pastoral functions in relation to the priesthood, no doubt, contributed to the “unfortunate consequences in the subsequent history of Roman Catholic theology, as his theology of priesthood was accepted and confirmed by the council of Trent and was passed on through the subsequent manual listed tradition to our own time. Those preparing for the Catholic priesthood prior to the second Vatican Council learned their theology from these manuals”¹¹⁸.

However, from the above discussions, we are able to discover that “institutionalism” or “cultic sense” is a development from the patristic period, through the Middle Ages to the Council of Trent and lingers on till Vatican II, where it receives a new current and agreeable baptismal name: “common priesthood”. In the institutional model, the ordained represents the clerical elite, responsible for the organization and administration of the Church. The mentality here is judicial and priesthood is viewed primarily as “power or authority” with a domineering spirit over the laity. Realizing the danger as the laity is marginalized in the Church, Vatican II decided to make a careful, “genuine shift by creating a new meaning to cultic conception as it included explicitly the priestly office of pastoral and preaching responsibilities”¹¹⁹. Its “concept of priesthood, in its full extension, may be said to include not only cultic but also the clerical, the pastoral and the kerygmatic”¹²⁰. As it is in relation to tradition, following the new order of

117 Cf. T. Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 45, in P. Thomas; Ransch, S J, *Priesthood Today: An Appraisal*, New York: Paulist Press, 1992, p. 92.

118 T.P. Rausch, *Op. cit.*, p. 92.

119 A. Dulles, A., *Models of the Church*, expanded edition, Garden City: Image Books, 1983, p. 39.

120. *Ibid.*, p. 39.

amelioration by Vatican II, it has to be approached positively in such a way that the laity will not be reduced to passivity in the running of dioceses and parishes.

Vatican II tries to present the sacerdotalization of priest back to its early notion in New Testament meaning, passing from the hierarchical, authoritative and monopolistic sacerdotal of Bishops and priests to communal ministry where every one sees his/her function as a service to the community. This communal model puts a priority on those leadership qualities that are able to deepen a group's community experience and life which, as it were, challenges the function of Bishops, priests and competent lay people who have the gift to control "basic communities". The presidency of communion helps to "shift emphasis from a Rome-centred ecclesiology to the local Church in such a way that both become concentric", operating in the spirit of unity in diversity.

Following the Vatican II conception, one can talk of three functions of the Church. With the people of God, there is the ministry ordained and recognized. The triple dimensions of the Church refer to the threefold functions of Christ: prophetic, sacerdotal and royal priesthood. The faithful, generally, participate in these three functions of Christ. In the ministry ordained, we talk of the role of the pastors in communion with Bishops. In recognized minister, we refer to services and duties of the members.

Moreover, in this theological discussion different complementary models have been used. These are: the institution, the mystical communion, the sacrament or cultic, the herald (prophetic) and the servant. Each of these models of the Church corresponds to its nature of ministry. The institutional and cultic models as presented are associated with the clergy that is responsible for organization and administration. "The mentality here is largely juridical. Priesthood is viewed primarily in terms of power, whether it is the power to rule, to teach or to administer the sacraments"¹²¹. The communion model, as it were, concentrates in presenting the leadership qualities "that are able to deepen a group's community experience and life" in the spirit of collaboration. This function challenges the clergy to work in collaboration with the laity by encouraging and inspiring them. Thus, "the role of the priest...is the integration and coordination of all the charisms

¹²¹ A. Dulles, *Op. Cit.*, p. 163 in D. Donovan, *Op. cit.*, p. 134.

in a way that serves the unity of the Church”.¹²² The prophetic model has to do with “preaching and proclaiming the word of God” while the servant model presents the nature of “ministry that reaches beyond the inner life of the community and that concerns itself with the world and with issues like justice and peace”¹²³. This model involves teaching through life-style example and is good for a participative ecclesia. Ministry of Christ entails different functions all of which, no one person could hope to undertake alone. Priestly service “may, in particular cases, be more liturgical, more sacral or more secular, more personal or more bureaucratic”¹²⁴ depending on individual clergy.

The fullness of the priestly office, which very few individuals adequately encompass, would include the building of community, presiding at worship, the proclamation of the word of God and activity for the transformation of secular society in the light of the gospel”.¹²⁵ “The average priest would emphasize one or other of these functions”¹²⁶ but effectively coordinates matters by collaboratively working out systems of operation with the lay people who are part of the Church. In Jesus, priesthood is “service” whether ministerial or communal, and it is the understanding of this priestly authority exercised as service that constitutes the ideal of ministry today, which all the agents of evangelization are called to live out in the work of collaboration.

In view of our thesis, instead of maintaining the old strict priestly hierarchical structure, in the words of Father Chris Etokudoh, we could shift “to a more Synodal or collegial model, whereby, there are structures for the participation of membership in the ecclesiastical processes, particularly decision-making processes as this touches all”¹²⁷. In our dissertation, we are looking at it from the point of view of “Communalism” which is “the key to understanding the ecclesiology of the early Church”¹²⁸ and the Vatican II. The Church uses the word communion to “donate both the local and the universal Church, which is conceived of as a communion of communions”¹²⁹. The active role of the

122 *Ibid.*, p. 166.

123 Cf.D. Donovan, *Op. cit.*, pp. 134-135.

124 A. Dulles, *Op. cit.*, p. 175 in D. Donovan, *Ibid.*, p. 135.

125 *Ibid.*, p.175.

126 D. Donovan, *Op. cit.*, p. 135.

127 Rev. C. N. Etokudoh, “*The Church’s Mission in Nigeria Beyond the Year 2000*”, presented at the Bi-annual Meeting of the Association of Nigerian Priests in Belgium on the 24th April, 1998, p. 3.

128 Ludwig Hertling, *Communion: Church and Papacy in Early Christianity*, Chicago: Loyola University, 1972, pp. 15-76 quoted in C.N. Etokudoh, *Ibid.*, p. 4.

129 C.N. Etokudoh, *Op. cit.*, p. 4.

laity in collaboration with the clergy within the communal ecclesia, squares well with the African spirit of communalism being expressed in a family Church model, which will be our next chapter, and it has to remain our point of reference in terminology as members of Christ's body. Our goal here is communion with Christ which is well expressed in the Eucharistic communion of oneness. The unique people of God in the New Testament are seen as the body of Christ, who is the head. The agents of evangelization have to see their ministry or charisma as services in and for the community, both the clergy and the laity.

The above reflection helps to show that ministry is conceived as service, with a view to correcting the problem of power in the Church. Moreover, our Catholic understanding of ordination as a sacrament includes recognition that function implies *ontology*. This is an awareness that is being created now more than before on the sensitivity to the *Pneumatological* as well as the Christological aspects of Church and the ministry. The Holy Spirit will continue to guide the Church and its position remains indispensable. We have to learn to work collaboratively in our ecclesial communities whether clergy or laity.

7. Conclusion

This historical exposition on the central aspect of ecclesiology as presented in this chapter, helps us to understand that it is possible for the clergy and the laity to work together for a common purpose in the Lord's vineyard as it has been from the beginning. It has also revealed the relevance of putting into play the gifts of the members and the dangers involved in concentration of functions in the hands of the few individuals of the community by creating a division among the clergy and the laity.

However, to believe in the presence and influence of God made man, we need to be able to see some continuity between the pattern of life of the New Testament community and that of the Church today. Included here is not just a recognisable structure, but also the regular revision of the life of the Church under the supervision of the spiritual leaders.

Without such historical reference, Christian faith in some continents will continue to remain as an object of research and a source of ideas that we may if we wish, make our own, but it will no longer be believed as the action of God on our behalf. If Christianity,

as it has been known so far throughout its history is to survive, and more than that, to revive and to maintain its joints, we need to discover how its ministry represents through the guidance of the Holy Spirit and “not just the traditions and customs of a particular religious society, but the God in which name they call that society altogether”¹³⁰.

Following our reflection, one notices that our concentration is on Church as a theological entity and not as a sociological type where a group of people consider themselves to be the Church and the makers of everything. We need an ecclesiology where the Church refers to the mystery of Christ as real community of those who believe in him and assemble in his name. In this context, the Church is not purely human beings only; the Spirit of God is there to animate it and it ought to be given a chance. Following the instruction of Uzukwu, the attention of the image of our Church should be focused on the mutual service of the members towards one another and on the subordination of the particular charisma of all to that of the whole body of the faithful. It should also be seen as a community of people who are individually free and whose activities are recognized within. Ministry is a religious activity that involves all the members. It is rooted in the person and teaching of Christ. As part of the Church’s activity, it needs to be lived out as a service within the community of the faithful. What is actually needed is mutual collaboration on the system of ministry that will help to create awareness on both the clergy and the laity in carrying out the administrative function of the Church.

In view of the nature of our ecclesia and the roles of the agents of evangelization in Africa, Igboland in particular, our discussion in this chapter will help us a lot in considering our thesis problem. These and other similar discussed insights will guide our reflection seriously on the deepening of the Christian faith in Igboland, which at this point, needs a model of the Church that responds to the challenges of Africa society today (socially, politically, economically and religiously) as our concentration is on Igboland. Igbos need a Church that will not be divorced of good cultural values, a Church that will recognize the role of the laity, reconcile all agents of evangelization and commit them to the African system of collaboration and care, etc. To deepen in Igboland the reality of the Church, which is the institutional agent and framework of the whole of evangelization,

130 M. Richards, *Op. cit.*, 1988, p. 16.

her people need a Church “that bears witness to a different kind of the world”¹³¹, a Church that is cultural in the lives of the people. To achieve this, our ecclesia leaders are called to exhibit a deep commitment to their vocation as ministers by maintaining loyalty to the traditions and teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ, our model, as we bring these doctrinal backgrounds into contact with the cultural lives and circumstances of the people they serve. This is where we strongly suggest a change in the ecclesial perspective of missionary evangelization as we propose the *umunna*-family ecclesia of God as a good symbol that will help to reflect the people’s life of extended family system, life of communalism.

131 E. E. Uzukwu, (ed.) Bulletin of Ecumenical Theology – Christian Mission in the Third Millennium, Globalization and Reconciliation, Nigeria: The Ecumenical Association of Nigerian Theologians, 1997, Vol. 9:1-2, pp. 89-113.

CHAPTER VII

NEW PROPOSED MODEL OF BEING CHURCH: THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS ON INCULTURATED COMMUNAL ECCLESIA IN IGBOLAND

We have previously presented the worldview of the Igbos before the advent of Christianity in view of the thesis problem we are dealing with. This was followed with the presentation of first early missionary evangelization with their applied strategies that lacked appropriate inculturation, for a better reflection of the issue. Through comparative analysis we discovered that the gospel message did not actually pass through the cultural life of the people. It was mainly adaptation, imposition of foreign culture in a system of evangelization that was highly clericalized. While referring to our actual problem, we still see the Gospel message resting peripherally and needs to be incarnated; the Church is still foreign and sometimes colonial to the local people. The nature of religious formation and family spirituality still remain the same as inherited from the early missionaries which cannot fully inspire the local community in its life style. The hierarchical, clerical and institutional model of Church still dominates and for many, this model of the Church minimizes the active role of the laity and the Igbo notion of communalism through active participation as seen in our observation section. This situation, in spite of the populated number of the Catholics, is not very encouraging. Effective collaboration among the agents of evangelization is lacking, especially between the clergy and the laity; religious conflicts abound and fundamentalism or traditional religious sects appear to be on the increase. Analysing this, we discovered that the present system ecclesiology is somehow defective and needs to be improved. The missionary methods of the early nineteenth century evangelization resulted to the type of “missions” that will continue to be at great risk of never becoming fully local Churches that should be self-supporting and self-propagating culturally. This has kept the Igbo Church at its infancy stage by lacking of its qualitative structural growth within its culture. Igbo Church is challenged to be more communal oriented that would serve the society with less emphasis on an institutional model that is asymmetrically oriented.

Following our survey interviews, the general feeling in many parts of Africa today, particularly in Igboland of Nigeria, is that the present nature of being Church puts “majority of the people in bondage and the continent in the mood of dependency”. As earlier observed, this ugly situation calls for a change for better. This will mean replacing the theology of adaption with the theology of inculturation or incarnation through a new designed communal ecclesiology. This has to be expressed through collaborative efforts of *umunna* in the light of the culture and the teachings of the Church. The dissertation, as this chapter will show, insists on the spirit of *umunnarism/communalism* that involves all the faithful for the realization of God’s kingdom on earth, particularly in Igboland.

The spirit of collaboration will be expressed in this context through African cultural perspective, being tailored down to the life of the Igbos, in view of their world-view. Borrowing the Igbo concept, communalism is better expressed as unity is strength (*Igwe bu ike*). This has to do with fraternity, *umunna bu ike*, co-participation or communal co-operation, mutual sharing, justice and equality of liberty – “sharing of available resources in the midst of limitations, scarcity and human needs”¹ together in good understanding. This involves seeing and living life not only as *umunna* (communal oriented), but more as *umunna* (extended family relations), as we all are brothers and sisters in Christ, with God as our Father. It is through this process that the spirit of collaboration, love and solidarity among the agents of evangelization will be realized in the proposed communal ecclesia. We will concentrate, in this chapter, on the issue of communalism that encourages active participation as our option for the improvement of the present ecclesia.

We feel that it is this community oriented model of ecclesia that can fully recognize and involve laymen and laywomen, religious men and women, seminarians, youths, gifted charisms and intellectuals to participate actively in the inculturation of the Gospel message within the local Church in Igboland. After having considered, in the previous chapter, some key elements on the universal Church tradition about our issue, references will be made of the African Synod of 1994 that generically presented Africans with Church as a Family Model from which perspective our local orientation here is more meaningful. It is then important to put this proposal in the appropriate perspective. To

¹ C. Ekei, *Justice in Communalism*, Nigeria-Lagos: Smagh Co. Ltd, 2001, p. 195.

effectuate this, we have chosen to handle this chapter under the following steps: (1) need for ecclesia reconstruction, (2) appropriation within the African context, (3) new model of ecclesia and its ontological foundation (4) new model of ecclesia *and* the African extended family system, (5) new model of ecclesia and basic family communities, (6) new model of ecclesia in comparison with former models in history of the Church (7) new model of ecclesia in communion with the universal Church, (8) new model of ecclesia and the suitable leadership style, (9) the significance of the new model of ecclesia and (10) the conclusion.

1. Need for new construction

The providential words of Pope John Paul II helped to shape the minds of the African Fathers as they reflected seriously on the nature of ecclesiology and the need for originality. Pope John Paul II, addressing the priests, religious and seminarians of Zaire at Kinshasa in 1980, on the occasion of the centenary of the evangelization of that country, said, *inter alia*:

You have lived a first great stage, an irreversible stage. A *new stage* is open to you, a no less exalting one, even if it necessarily involves new trails, and perhaps temptations of discouragement. It is the stage of perseverance, that in which it is necessary to pursue the strengthening of the faith, the conversion, in-depth, of souls and ways of life, so that they will correspond better and better to your sublime Christian vocation; not to mention evangelization which you must yourselves continue in sectors or environments where the Gospel is still unknown”².

Here, Pope made it clear that Africans have outlived the first stage of evangelization that is more of the transplanting of the whole of the *Corpus Christianum* than of conveying the real essence of the gospel message that should strive for the second stage that is incarnation (through the application of inculturation) where Christ, through the Good News, will be at home in African continent. In many occasions, he has repeatedly used the phrase “need for the *new era of evangelization*”, while addressing Africans in their different countries. For instance, in anticipation of his pastoral visit to Nigeria, he expressed the hope that his visit would initiate ‘*a new era of evangelization*’ which, as it were, was the wish of Paul VI for the whole Church while he was closing the

² John Paul II, *Addressing the priests, Religious and to Seminarians during Official Welcoming Ceremonies in the Cathedral of 'Notre Dame du Zaire*, (3 May 1980) *L'Osservatore Romano*, Weekly Edition in English, 12 May, 1980, in *Lineamenta, Synod of Bishops, - The Church in Africa and her Evangelizing Mission Towards the Year 2000 “You shall be My Witnesses”*, (ACTS 1:8), Vatican City, 1990, p. 9.

third General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in 1974 and expressed again in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*³. For John Paul II, it will be a fresh impulse to transform individuals and society. And since the “the path of culture is the path of man”, the new era will see an effective evangelization of culture such that each person in his country will hear again the marvellous deeds of God in his own language (cf. Acts 2:11) and from within his own culture⁴.

Gradually, African theologians started to build their hope on the words of Pope John Paul II, by maintaining the need for gospel incarnation while retaining its essential doctrine. The Holy Father proclaimed thus: “Evangelization is the proclamation of the Good News of salvation realized in Jesus Christ and offered to all”. But that the “first proclamation ought to be centred on Christ, the same yesterday and today, the enduring and ever new manifestation of God’s goodness towards us”. In our Lord Jesus Christ, “the spirit is given to us to accomplish our sanctification and to transform the world. Unchanging in its content which is Christ, this evangelization will be ‘new in its ardour, new in its method, and new in its mode of expression’”⁵. Like the international review *Concilium*, this speech encourages a continual renewal of theology as endorsed by the Vatican Council II. According to the African Synod Fathers of 1994, “the resumption of the evangelization of Africa in the last century took place during an era in which most African countries were dependent territories. The colonial period in Africa has now come to an end. Therefore, the context in which evangelization has to be carried out is a new one, that of Independent African countries”⁶.

Moreover, following the Conciliar documents that encouraged a renewed system of evangelization, it is *adherem* now that the “Local Church is being managed by the indigenous and expatriate clergy and religious unlike the colonial period when the agents of evangelization were ‘exclusively missionaries from abroad’”⁷. In the light of the pastoral problems, the present model of ecclesia ought to maintain the orientation for real

3 J. C. Okoye, *A new era of Evangelization*, in *New Era of Evangelization*, sponsored by the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Nigeria, Nigeria-Ibadan: Saints Peter & Paul’s Seminary Ibadan Press, 1984, p. 9-38.

4 *Ibid.*, p. 9.

5 Message of the Synod in M. Brown (ed.), *The African Synod, Documents, Reflections, Perspectives*, New York: Maryknoll, Orbis Publishing Books, 1996, No. 9, 73.

6 *Lineamenta (The Church in Africa and her Evangelising Mission Towards the Year, 2000 “You shall be my witness” Acts 1:8)*, Vatican city Press, 1990, *Op. cit.*, p.10.

7 *Ibid.*, p.10.

root-taking of the Gospel message, being propagated by the local evangelizers in the spirit of collaboration. Reverend Eugene Uzukwu, commenting on the pastoral teething problems, writes:

The colonial ideology is that of domination and exploitation of the colonized. The machine for the realization of their colonial ideology was both technical (colonial military superiority) and religious (Christianity). Even if some missionaries opposed the methods of the colonisers, evangelization and colonization were linked; this link was even foreseen in the Berlin conference of 1884-85 where Africa was partitioned. The consequences of the colonial experience were enormous. The violence, which accompanied colonization and evangelization, has to be rejected in the reconstruction of the continent. A renewal in our way of being Church will make a contribution in this direction⁸.

As presented in our description, this is the time for Africans in general and for the Igbos in particular, to maintain structural local Church where the members will be themselves instead of operating on borrowed robes contrary to their cultural lives by being subservient to higher powers in their own land.

Another reason for reconstruction is that the “contemporary Africa is undergoing enormous and rapid changes in the political, economic, social and cultural spheres, in view of her present conditions. These new changes necessarily call for new strategies for evangelization”⁹ and for a new model of ecclesia that will match with today’s African situation, hence the importance of the new ecclesial family of God. The implementation of this new orientation assumes a great effort of human, moral and social reconstruction.

There is need for effective dialogue between Christianity and the culture of the people that embrace the faith. The foundations of moral values and human behaviour appear at the very least, uncertain, and with them the foundations of living together in society. The traditional communal life is also weakened, and deep-faith commitment among the people is lacking due to some extent, the existing poor collaboration among the agents of evangelization and poor dialogue between Christianity and the culture that receives it. Violence, in a hundred different forms, becomes established in everyday life, adulterates the relationships of the individual with himself and with his fellow creatures, and produces among people a diminishing interest in the building of the human family. Even

⁸ E. E. Uzukwu (ed.), *Bulletin of Ecumenical Theology: Power, Authority and Leadership –African and Christian*, Vol. 6, Nigeria: Snaap Press Ltd., pp. 16-17.

⁹ *Lineamenta*, *Op. cit.*, p. 12.

the task of seriously building one's own life loses its interest. Since not much is expected of life, happiness comes to consist in evasion, and the fulfilment of life becomes a matter of luck, or to the vast entertainment of materialism and exploitation. Partial and secondary aspects of life occupy the central place in work, in concerns, and in conversation. Under such depressed situation, the option for communal ecclesia of God's family becomes an antidote as it will help to address these issues whereby, everybody becomes an actor instead of an observer in a committed dynamic, integral and self-reliance ecclesia.

The phenomenon has, doubtlessly, very different shades and tonalities in the life of the Africans today. As it were, it is a matter of rebuilding almost entirely a more sound committed religious, social, economic, and political life, starting from the ruins left by the system that has suppressed almost everything including the culture, human collaborative relationship and respect for life, as it had occupied every aspect of social life and of conscience¹⁰.

In each of these cases, a task of reconstruction is unavoidable. Beginning with the human being and the family, it will extend to all the boundaries and all the institutions of social and religious life. Being frank to the present situation, I do not see, honestly, how this indispensable reconstruction can be carried out without there being raised anew, fundamental rhetorical but pertinent questions in public forums and in our ecclesial communities: what is the meaning of human life in the present context? What are the basis, the scope, and the limits of moral values? What nature of ecclesia is pertinent to meet up with the rehabilitation of human dignity? Who has the authority to determine it or to determine its application and what is the tonality for the use of authority in the ecclesial family of God?¹¹ These questions and others of the same nature present the need for our option of communalism within the new style of evangelization for the renewal of our ecclesial perspectives.

10 Cf. Cardinal A. Suquia, "The New Evangelization: Some tasks and Risks of the present" in Communion: International Catholic Review. Vol. XIX, Num. 4. winter 1992; pp. 515-516.

11 Cf. Cardinal A. Suquia (the origin of this thought), reacted in the same manner when he was reviewing the implications of communion, during European Synod, *Ibid.*,

2. Appropriation of new construction within the African context.

The question of reconstruction calls for a new evangelization and for a new model of ecclesia to match with the African mission. Being guided with the moral encouragement from the Holy Father who has studied and known the African culture, the nature of its early evangelization and its problems before making his propositions, the issue of new system of mission today becomes imperative. With the enlightenment of the Conciliar documents (*Ad Gentes and Gaudium et Spes*), the African Synod Fathers came to the conclusion that there is actually an urgent need for a model of the Church that will accommodate the new style of evangelization of the Gospel message within the cultural lives of the Africans.

It is rather a dynamic struggle of religious, cultural and psychological dimensions in which Christianity, as a human phenomenon, must change its appearance in a new society and culture it comes into contact with so that gradually, a communal ecclesia family of God must come slowly to birth. For some people, this might involve a religious revolution. Religious revolution must, in short, involve social and cultural revolution if it is itself to be worthy of the name¹². In relation to culture, this involves intelligent use of material things and the significance given to them within the pattern of the society. This, inevitably, will grow out of the accepted worldview or standard of values of the people's cultural society. A revolution in the view of standards and ideals has to be expressed culturally. Mission adaptation basically means allowing a new pattern to evolve ecclesiastically, culturally and pastorally,¹³ but in practice as experienced, it fails to have lasting root. The "problem is the old-fashioned impression of foreign cultural motif on a new Christian group with the 'Assimilado' method"¹⁴. As the situation stands today in Igboland, "to have millions of Catholics who are not living or having the chance of living a proper Christian life is hardly a blessing. And to create a Church consisting of millions of lapsed Catholics is not a matter of rejoicing. In the words of Pope John Paul II, "there is no virtue in numbers alone if the quality is lacking"¹⁵.

12 Cf. A. Hastings: *Church and Mission in Modern Africa*, London: Williams Clowes and Sons, Ltd. 1967, p. 28.

13 *Ibid.*, p. 28.

14 *Ibid.*, p. 28.

15 Pope John Paul II, *Princeps Pastorum*, 26, in A. Hastings, *Ibid.*, p. 28.

Looking at the first evangelization, one sees at a glance that the Church in the first centuries lacked many institutions, pastoral projects, intellectual traditions and the spirit of inculturation that we have today. The difficulties for the spread of Christianity in the ancient world were not less, even though the method was different than those of today, nor was the Christian faith less strange due to the culture that dominated the world (Roman), a culture with a strong consciousness of its superiority and proud of itself¹⁶.

However, considering the nature of the early missionary evangelization of the Igbos, there is an urgent need for the Church to undertake a new era of evangelization in the light of today's mission. For there to be a change, "the gospel must now become at home among the cultures of the people – inculturation of the Gospel into the lives of the people. The new era is one of effective encounter between the Gospel and culture"¹⁷.

New era of evangelization is a Christian way of responding to the present condition of our society, "the specific arrival of the Church as an inevitable task of rehabilitating what is human in the very humanity of men"¹⁸. The response to the condition of the society corresponds to the Vatican II ecclesia social doctrine for the "whole human family"¹⁹. Human, here, is based upon the dignity of each person in the image and likeness of God. It discusses justice as an essential quality for all and it also concerns human culture, human collaboration and its development through the agents of evangelization in local Churches. The social doctrine (in the nature of justice and peace), for Gustavo Gutiérrez, is ideological, because it does not have a subject that verifies it in history, and this makes it totally ineffective. The recent Magisterium, on the other hand, puts the theme of the subject more and more at the forefront, so that the social doctrine appears as the experience of the people with God in their journey through history, which operates within a local culture that receives the message. This involves the people's peculiar mode of comprehending reality and responding to it; the manner in which the gospel is incarnated in the pattern of life and the concrete history of men²⁰. The important

16 Cf. Cardinal A. Suquia, (the origin of this thought), *Op. cit.*, pp. 520

17 J. C. Okoye., *Op. cit.*, p. 9.

18 Cf. Cardinal A. Suquia, (the origin of this thought), *Op. cit.*, p. 520.

19 Cf. The Mission of the Church in the World: Two documents addressed to this issue are *The decree on the Church's Missionary Activity (Ad Gentes)*, and *The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (Gaudium et Spes)*.

20 Cf. Rocco Buttiglione, *Para leer la Centesimus annus*, in *Communión* - (Spanish edition), *Op. cit.*, 1991, pp. 389-405.

aspect of the role of evangelization is the whole dimension of the inculturation of the gospel into the lives of the people. This will help them “to bring forth from their own living traditions the original expressions of Christian life, celebration and thought”²¹ within the new communal ecclesia. This challenges the Catholic Bishops of Nigeria, especially those of Igboland, to endeavour to implement practically what they have nurtured theoretically, so that their decisions and actions will be meaningfully utilized in the cultural lives of the people who profess their faith in God through Jesus Christ.

3. New ecclesia and its ontological foundation

It is of interest to note that our proposed communal ecclesiology that has to be realized in Igboland in particular will serve as a pastoral perspective to the Church-as-family of God which the African Synod proposed for the continent of Africa. The Synod Fathers see the family of God Church as the best alternative and projected it as a possibility for the African theologians to explore its richness as the fitting model to be fostered in Africa”²². The Synod message highlighted fundamentally the ontological aspect of family relationship which has “its origin is in the Blessed Trinity” knowing that the intrinsic value of a community is the bond of communion. The Synod statement reads: “The local Churches of Africa, the people of God in assembly throughout the world, it is primarily to you that we proclaim Jesus Christ. You are the Family of God”²³. The Synod message indicates that it was in view of the family of God “that the Father has taken the initiative in the creation of Adam”. When Adam failed to measure up to expectation, God the Son, “Christ, the New Adam and Heir to the nations, founded by the gift of his body and blood” became man for the salvation of all humanity. Still, following the family of God, “The Holy Spirit became manifest to the world, which the Son sent from the Father so that there should be communion among all”. The Synod Fathers maintained that Jesus Christ came to meet each person in the “cultural path inherited from the ancestors. He travels with each person to throw light on his traditions and customs and to reveal to him that these are a prefiguration, distant but certain, of him, the

21 Cf. *Catechism Tradendae*, p. 53 quoted in J. Okoye, *Op. cit.*, P. 9.

22 P. Lwinda, “*The Church-as-family: Its Implications For The Formation of Agents of Evangelization*”, in A. Radoli, SOM (ed.), *AFFER - African Ecclesial Review*, August/October/December, Published by the AMECEA Pastoral Institute (Gaba) 1999, Vol. 41, Numbers, 4, 5, & 6, p. 188.

23 Message of the Synod, in Brown, (ed.) *Op. cit.*, No 24, p. 77.

new Adam, the elder of the multitude of *umunna* which we are”²⁴. There is no doubt that the family model is fitting and appropriate for Africa as it has some correlation between the African understanding of family and the Church as family of God. Family of God as a true image emphasizes care for the other, solidarity and warmth of relations, acceptance, dialogue and trust. It also shows how authority is to be exercised as service in love.

The pertinent issue is that the intrinsic value of a community is the quality of the existing relationship, which makes it possible²⁵. The reason of this is simple: “The living God, creator of heaven and earth and the Lord of history is the Father of the one great human family to which we all belong as members”²⁶. By virtue of our baptism, we all share in the divine family life. Our whole being cries out with joy and thanksgiving to the living God for the great gift of our redemption: “to the Father, whose *family* we are, to the Son, from whom derives our *brotherhood*, which overcomes fratricidal hate, to the Spirit of love, who moulds us into images of the Trinity”²⁷. The people of God all over the world constitute “*a single Family of God*”²⁸. This is a family of our first community and in most basic way, our Lord gathers, forms and renews us as his begotten people. Commenting on how vital and important this family ecclesial model is to Africans, Archbishop John Onaiyekan, a Nigerian had this to say about our ecclesia:

A lot of attention was paid to examining the Church, as it now exists in Africa, with its strengths and weaknesses. Generally young and vibrant, it is full of the enthusiasm and optimism, which the experience of growth bestows. On the other hand, it needs to deepen its spiritual conviction, pursue the full knowledge of the truth of the Gospel and mobilize itself over more effectively for mission in co-responsibility and collaboration²⁹.

Realizing the problem of evangelization that does not necessarily touch on the life-style of the people, our stress is on the irreplaceable value of witness of life for all the propagators of faith. The new communal ecclesia family reflects anthropological, cultural and ontological parallelisms between the image of the family in Africa and that of the

²⁴ *Ibid.*, No 24, p. 77.

²⁵ Message of the Synod, 20, in M. Brown, *Op. cit.*, p. 77.

²⁶ Message no.23, in M. Brown, *Ibid.*, p. 77.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, no. 25.

²⁹ Archbishop J. Onaiyekan, *What we saw and heard at the African Synod*, in E.E. Uzukwu (ed.), *Bulletin of Ecumenical Theology – The African Synod: Initial Results and Reflections*, Vol.6/2 Nigeria: Snaap Press, 1994, p. 8.

Church”³⁰. Due to the operative nature of this *family system* metaphor, the spirit of respect, collaboration, dedication, love and mutual understanding, etc., do exist. For the African people in general, the opted image expresses very well what the Church really is: members of God’s family, fraternally working together for the salvation of all humanity.

The Synod Fathers of Africa made a good cultural observation by realising that we are one family of God. By the virtue of our faith, we all belong to a single family, the family of God. In Christ and through the gift of his Spirit, we share in God’s Triune nature and become in a more intimate way, God’s Children. The unity that is ours at the level of Christ’s Spirit should overflow into our actual, everyday relations with one another³¹.

What gave rise to this proposal by the Synod was the experience of small Christian basic communities in the Association of Member Episcopal Conferences of East-African (AMECEA) countries that constantly presented small unit concrete model of how ecclesiology can be brought to the daily and direct experience of the people at the local level. But what was presented by the Synod was more of a motivating concept for theologians to develop within their circumscriptions. Thus, to encourage further thought for the development of this kind of historical ecclesiology of God’s family that needs to be inculturized within local Churches, the Synod Fathers mandated African theologians to research and work out the theology of the people of God as a family, exploring all the riches contained in this concept³². What it means is that perhaps, the Synod did not go very deep on this issue but tried to show the importance of it in African anticipated theology, since it has been universally accepted in the Church. This mandate, specially, challenges some African theologians to deplore their innovative potentialities and creativities in trying to give a new face to peculiar African ecclesiology in relation to the contemporary mission challenging problems that pervert the thought of the continent generally.

Many African theologians approached the issue of family of God differently. Reverend Cletus Eze Aleke concentrated on the *Leadership role of the Priest in the*

30 Cardinal F. Arinze, *Op cit.*, p. 12

31 D. Donovan, *Preparing For Worship*, New York: Paulist Press, 1995, p. 28.

32 AMECEA, *Ecclesia in Africa*, *Op. cit.*, p. 63.

*Parish Today*³³, Reverend James Okoye reflected on *The Ministry and Life of Presbyters in the Special Assembly For African Synod of Bishops*³⁴, Reverend Oliver Onwubike wrote on the Echoes from the African Synod – The Future of the African Church from Present and Past Experiences³⁵, AECAWA³⁶ produced a text based on A Self-Reliant Church as family, etc. This is where I came to the scene, drawing the approach home to what is pertinent and local to the Igbos and at the same time relevant to Africans as a whole, by not only concentrating on the family, (which by its nature is generic oriented in the history of the Church) but relating it more to communal aspect of ecclesiology in view of the Igbo spirit of *umunnarism*. By its nature, communal family ecclesia is multifaceted: it covers Trinitarian, Christological, Sacramental, Ecclesiological, Pastoral, Evangelical, Cultural and Communitarian aspects of the Catholic theology that are correlated in application. This helps me to bring out clearly the features or characteristics of a communal ecclesia as previously treated under communalism in Igboland with extended family as its base. While reflecting all the other aspects of African family ecclesia, our emphasis is specifically more on the aspect of communitarian as against the imperialistic spirit of individuation that pervades the western theology of Church as family of God. This perspective will help the agents of evangelization to function collaboratively as people of one true family of God.

Moreover, it is important to note that the model of the Church as family of God is not something new in the history of the Church. This image has always been one of the most central themes of post-Vatican II magisterial teachings. As we shall see later, there has been a profound biblical theological and ecclesiological growth of the concept of family of God in relation to those who profess their faith in Him. For instance, in the apostolic Consortium, Pope John Paul II describes the Church as a family of God, when he writes: “We must examine the many profound bonds linking the Church and the Christian family and establishing the family as “Church in miniature” (*Ecclesia domestica*) in such

33 C. E. Aleke, “Leadership role of the Priest in the Parish Today”, pp.249-276 in A.N.O. Ekwunife et al., Renewal of Priestly Life and Ministry: The Nigerian Experience, Nigeria-Enugu: Snaap Press Ltd. 1995.

34 J. Okoye, *The Ministry and Life of Presbyters in the Special Assembly For African Synod of Bishops*, in A.N.O. Ekwunife et al., *Op. cit.*, pp. 26-42.

35 O. A. Onwubiko, Echoes from the African Synod – The Future of the African Church from Present and Past Experiences, Nigeria-Enugu, Snaap Press Ltd, 1994,

36 AECAWA, (Association of Episcopal Conferences of Anglophone West Africa), A Self-Reliant Church, Ghana: AECAWA Publications, August 24, 1998.

a way, the family is a living image and historical representation of the mystery of the Church.

Generally, Church as family of God has the Trinity as a base, knowing that it is the foundation of our Christian religion. While it rests at the level of ontology, our approach draws the model home to practical application within the life-style of the people who live communally. Church as family of God is a generic word that is often used by the leaders of the Church but when it is explained within the view point of communalism or *umunnarism* as we are presenting it in our context, it sounds contextually familiar and peculia. The burden of this work, therefore, is to contribute to the present African theological reflection on the ecclesia family of God and too, to act as an attempt to present as it were, the current theological and pastoral mission that ought to be explored for the growth of the Church in Nigeria-African continent.

4. New model ecclesia and the extended family system

The African extended family system includes more than just mere relatives or the members of a nucleus family. It is more addressed as the multi-generational community and is normally referred to as genre generational relationship, which by its nature is very elastic to accommodate acquaintances. As we saw earlier, it is made up of the visible and invisible realities. The extended family system in Africa is “a sacred place where all the riches of our tradition converge”, communally. And as such, it is therefore the task of the communal ecclesia “to bring to the heart of this extended family a witness which transforms from inside our vision of the world, beginning from the spirit of the beatitudes, without forgetting the various tasks”³⁷ in the society. While calling the attention of the *umunna* pastoral agents on their responsibility towards the realization of this communal model, we are reminding the Igbo people that the vitality of the Church as the family God can only be “effective insofar as all our Christian families become authentic domestic Churches”³⁸. It is through this that everybody tries to live “in the image of the Holy Family”, the riches of the love which is in the heart of God poured out

37 1994 African Synod Message, No. 27 in M. Browne, *Op. cit.*, p. 78.

38 Synod message, number 27 in M. Brown, *Ibid.*, p. 79.

to the community. As people contribute their talents within the communal ecclesia, they learn to share and to increase in the love of God and of men³⁹.

The image of the Church as an “*African extended family system*” brings up “deep feelings” of togetherness, fear of the sacred and the life of communalism. African family “is the type where the deep African value of life comes to be, is protected and nourished; a place of belonging where sharing and solidarity are at the heart of daily life and where each one feels himself or herself to be truly at home”⁴⁰. It is basic and fundamental for life upbringing. Irrespective of proliferation of divergent denominations and sects, we are brothers and sisters, members of one great family with God as our Father and Christ as our senior brother. God, by His nature, is love and His desire is that we all live in fraternal love and communal friendship, religion/profession, race or sex, notwithstanding.

In Africa, the word “family” has a much wider meaning than it has in western societies⁴¹. It does not only refer to parents and children but it includes the grandfather, the grandmother, and so on⁴². The Igbo “Statute Book” has a comprehensive definition of the ideal concept of family as including: “wife or wives, husband, parents which include father and mother, grandfather and grandmother, step father and step mother, child which includes son and daughter, grandson and granddaughter”. These include also, “step son and step daughter of the deceased person, brother and sister which expression includes half brother and half sister, nephew and nieces of the deceased person who were under the age of 16 at the time of the death of the deceased, being maintained by him”⁴³. “The main base of Igbo traditional society is the natural community of the extended family and other blood relations”⁴⁴. It is all embracing and dynamic in constitution, in the sense that circumstances of life (birth, death or disaster) could broaden the meaning of family. The family, so defined is quite different from the western conception of family or nucleus family, made up of the father and mother and the children only⁴⁵. “African families in

39 The Message of African Synod, No 27 in Brown, *Ibid.*, p. 78.

40 Cf. AMECEA, Post- synodal Apostolic exhortation, Ecclesia in Africa of the Holy Father John Paul II, *Op cit.*, p.20, Ecclesia in Africa, N° 5 under family, p. 23.

41 F.U. Okafor, Igbo Philosophy of Law, Enugu, Fourth Dimension Publisher, 1992, p. 1.

42 J. C. Ekei, *Op. cit.*, p. 24.

43 Eastern Nigeria fatal Accident Law, 1956, 2/6/65 as Amendment by No 21 of 1960 in Ekei, *Ibid.*, p. 25.

44 P. M. Anene-Mmuo, Approach to the Inculturation of African Traditional Rituals and Political Institutions in the Church, Nigeria- Enugu: Snaap Press, 1998, p. 40.

45 Cf. Ekei, *Op. cit.*, p. 25.

general are sacred because they reflect the sense of wholeness in unity of being”⁴⁶. In them, there is life, love, truth, peace, respect, justice and freedom of expression, etc. We are a community down here on earth that is already in relation and communion with God the Father and the Son through the power of the Holy Spirit, the unifier. Our ecclesia community should be the earthly part of the Kingdom of God, which has its final destination in heaven. Generally, Igbo community is made of the assembly of “*Umunna*”, where the spirit of respect and collaboration, which yield more positive results than the spirit of individuation, imposition and command”, prevails. This spirit is another way of handling basic family communities that are united and collaborative. Moreover, the members of these families come together to make up a community, hence, the importance of our new communal ecclesia model.

5. New model of ecclesia and the basic family communities

This communal ecclesial system is manifested as the sign of the kingdom of God on earth, which designates fraternity, unity, peace, harmony, live and let live cordial friendship, understanding of one another and knowing each person by his/her name. Where there is communion, love and understanding, the kingdom of God reigns supreme⁴⁷ and strong relationship prevails. This applies no doubt to Igbo community where every member is known and, as such, is expected to be a small or basic community of members who are united for a common mission. In such a community, dialogue and mutual collaboration should be the life style. There are various ways of looking at dialogue or collaboration: through mutual sharing of experiences, talents, problems, etc; communal reflections like those involved in bible studies where the word of God is read and where experiences with one another are shared.

It is a model of a family where members express their feelings talking to each other when they have a common project in the Christian community to accomplish whether in a parish or in a diocese. What it means is that the group involved in the community will have to sit down together: Bishops, priests, religious and lay people-men and women, young and old to reason in the spirit of oneness. Respectful of the role of each one in the Chrisitan community family of God, they look at their problems and seek

46 E. Ekwunife, during my discussion with him on what characterize African/Igbo family.

47 P. Lwaminda, “*Formation of Agents of Evangelization For The Church-As-Family of God*”, in *AFER* (African Ecclesial Review), Vol. 41, Numbers 4-6, August/October/December 1999, pp. 181-193.

solutions together; joys and sorrows are shared with deep feelings and concern for the other. This does not take away the final responsibility for decisions on certain ecclesial issues by the Bishops or priests. Lonely decisions made without dialogue do not allow the Family of God to grow⁴⁸. For effective evangelization that demands division of work, the Church in Igboland ought to be communal, where everyone is accepted as a child of God and where dialogue prevails at all quarters: between Bishops, priests, religious and laity as well as between Christians and members of other denominations. This notion is well presented in the *Instrumentum Laboris* as follows:

In many answers to the *Lineamenta*, there is a strong emphasis on the notion of the Church as the family of God among men. It is felt that Africans can be more easily enabled to experience and to live the mystery of the Church as communion by utilising to good advantage, the African understands of the family, especially as regards the values of family unity and solidarity⁴⁹.

Thus, the spirit of the Church as “communal ecclesia” favours solidarity and sharing of personnel, ideas and resources among the members. Paul VI called the family, “*a domestic Church*” and considered that there should be found in every Christian family the various aspects of the entire Church⁵⁰. There is no doubt that in the history of the Church, there have been different but complementary models that match with the propagation of faith in various cultures.

6. Former ecclesia models in history and the new model of ecclesia

Since the Synod of 1994, many non-African theologians have been trying to puzzle out how the African Fathers came to the model of family. People have been wondering whether it was motivated by the 1994 ‘international year of the family’ or by the intrinsic African sense for the family⁵¹, since both events took place in the same year. The possibility of the latter (the world event) influencing the former (African Fathers’ choice of ecclesial) could be there. This is because, “This International Year of the Family is also the one in which the ecclesial consciousness of Africa, began after Vatican

48 Post-Synodal Apostolic exhortation, *Ecclesia in Africa* of the Holy father John Paul II, *Op cit.*, p. 20.

49 *Instrumentum Laboris*, *Op cit.*, p. 24.

50 *Ibid.*, p. 24.

51 Cf. J.K. Mutanga, Die “Bischofssynods Afrika”: ein Ereignis im Wachsen der Kirchen von Afrika, ein: *Schweizerische Kirchenzeitung*, 16 (1994), 233; und J. Levesque, *Les enjeux du Synod Africain, dans Lettre Inter Eglise*, 51-52, 1989. Quoted in Amuluche Gregory Nnamani, *The Synod Challenges the Church in Africa*, in Elochukwu E. Uzukwu, *The African Synod*, *Op. cit.*, pp. 41-55.

II, and it has, in the heart of this holy Synod, borne the good fruit of the Church as the Family of God”⁵², which has its historical perspective.

In history, Church as family of God has been expressed in different ways within the universal ecclesia. This image is very frequently used in the Old Testament (depicting the Israelites as God’s chosen people, members of God’s family), in the liturgy and in the constitution of the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, where the second chapter is devoted to it with a title: “On the People of God”. The use of this figure has a lot of advantages, not just as it projects the image of God as Father of the universe, but at the same time, it shows the relationship between the people of Israel of the old and the new people of Israel, the Church, “emphasizing the link between Old and New Testaments”⁵³.

We presented above that Church as family of God has its origin in the *Blessed Trinity*, at the depths of which the Holy Spirit, the sanctifier, acts as the bond of communion. In the Dogmatic constitution of the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, various biblical images are employed to present the Church as the “house of God” (Cf. *1 Tm. 3:15*), “the mystical body”, “people of God”, “temple of the Holy Spirit”, “flock” and “sheepfold”, the “bride of Christ”, “our mother” etc., which are really pertinent to Africa. But in view of her peculiar cultural situations, Church as communion became more applicable to the continent. Through this way, the Church tries to accomplish its mission of establishing a united family of God’s people on earth with the existing realities.

According to Roger Haight, S.J. in his book, *Christian Community in History*, human beings are “historically and socially constituted, and all the particular understandings of the human phenomenon are intrinsically limited. Therefore, to understand the human, one must chart its history”⁵⁴. Thus, understanding any particular phenomenon of history does begin with its past origin that gives insight of the processes. “For, history includes the experience, the interpretation, the receiving, and the assertion of the tradition within every new situation”⁵⁵. As it were, the implication of history here

52 Synod message 29; Cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 6.

53 Cf. P. Ryan, *Building a New Idea and Image of Church*, in Cecil McGarry & P. Ryan (eds.), *Ibid.*, p. 9.

54 R. Haight, S.J., *Christian Community in History*, Vol. I, New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group, 2004, p. 49.

55 *Ibid.*, p. 24.

is not just doctrinal model, but it includes also the more important aspect, the concrete contextual praxis of the Church. The historical character of ecclesiology reveals the fact that it continues to acquire properties of enrichment as it passes from one culture to another. Roger Haight rather presents it thus:

There will never be a single ecclesiology. Materially speaking no ecclesiology will be able to encompass the whole Church. For not only is the whole Church constantly changing so that nothing in it, including any one of its parts, remain quite the same, but also at any given time, the whole Church always bursts the boundaries of the particular point of view that every ecclesiology imposes on its subject matter. Presently, ecclesiology as a discipline, therefore, does not share a single common body of truths. Whatever unity it may possess might be gained on the level of method. But one has to expect different ecclesiologies based on different shared suppositions and premises that are directed by different situations of the Churches⁵⁶.

Our interest in this quotation is the principle of analogy we are deducing from it: those ecclesiological models, like the cultural appropriation and practice in local circumstances, have always been changing. Hence, there are differences in perspective, despite the general term “family of God” or “people of God”. However, the essences that have to do with the actual words of the master remain unchanged – like the words of the Eucharist. Thus, it is in the light of ecclesial perspective that we are considering the model of communal family of God that will reflect the characteristic style of the people’s cultural lives.

However, the fact remains that the proposal of communal ecclesia as a theological model presupposes the “centrality of family in the African thought and life-style”⁵⁷. For instance, the African Synod sees the family Church as a base for free and generous circulations of both goods and personnel at the service of society for the maintenance of justice and peace⁵⁸.

Cardinal Thiandoum testifies this fact when he says: “This concept, so often evoked in the responses to the *Lineamenta*, has deep roots in our African culture. It also expresses the profound Christian and cultural values of communion, fraternity, solidarity and peace of the people. For in the truly African family, joys, difficulties and trials are

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

⁵⁷ A. G. Nnamani, “*The Synod Challenges the Church in Africa*”, in Elochukwu E. Uzukwu, *Bulletin of Ecumenical Theology, The African Synod*, *Op. cit.*, p. 49.

⁵⁸ Cf. African Synod Message 31 & 44 in M. Browne (ed.), *Op.cit.*

shared in a trusting dialogue”⁵⁹. All the same, the essential values, which the imagery of the family ecclesia evokes, are implicitly in use in the communal ecclesial model. For the Igbos, the image of the communality can best explain what the model of the Church as Mystical Body of Christ intends to say⁶⁰. Though old model, it still retains its importance in the Church. Thus, the notion of communal here corresponds with the image of the Church not only as the “mystical body of Christ” (Vatican I) but also as “people of God”/or “*common priesthood*” (Vatican II) or even “Communion” (Post Synodal of 1985) as used in Europe, which designates common participation by all. In the African context, the choice of communal family ecclesia is pertinent for her culture and transitional experiences of life. Thus, “while the African consciousness for the family must have been touched by the crisis in the vision of the family today, the perception of reality through the imagery of the communalism is intrinsic to African world-view”⁶¹ which Igbo culture is strongly part of.

Following the history of the Church, we can say that each model plays a complementary role with the others to give a deeper and full understanding of the theology of ecclesia as a true communal family of God. In view of human development, it is well known for instance that the understanding of the Church as the “people of God” or “common priesthood of the faithful” or “communion” helped a lot in proving the quality of participation and interrelationship between the laity, religious, priests and Bishops. But even the most recent model “communion”, which European Synod proposed was highly criticised by Cardinal Angel when he maintains that in the history of the Church, “communion” has had its sad stories, in Europe in particular and in the world in general. The Church is ever more conscious of the role that the breaking of communion has played in the Churches of Europe during this second millennium, not only in the dechristianization, but also in the drama that the European conscience and the peoples of Europe have been living in recent centuries⁶². While the we extols these other models as relevant in their capacities in relation to cultures that receive the message, it is our conviction here that communal model is a right choice in a right direction, meant to

59 Cardinal Thiandoum, The Tasks of the Special Synod For Africa, in Origins CNS documentary Service, Vol 23/44 April 21, 1994 quoted in Amuluche Gregory Nnamani’s Paper, *Ibid.*, p. 49.

60 *Ibid.*, p. 52.

61 *Ibid.*, p. 49.

62 Cf. Cardinal A. Suquia, *Op. cit.*, p. 17.

be explored by the African theologians, particularly the Igbos as it corresponds with the African Fathers' notion of family ecclesia, but in a wider sense.

The Church is of its nature a mystery that eludes a precise definition. While no single model can exhaust the implications of this divine reality, every new one can bring new aspects to the limelight. Hence, the changes in perception and perspective necessitate the adoption of new images and the existing ones. Thus, while old models retain their significance, new ones can arise, not necessarily as better descriptions or as rivals, but evidently with new aspects of Church life⁶³. "Each model understands differently of the mission, membership, leadership, and spirituality of the Church, capitalizes on different strengths, and guards against different weakness⁶⁴.

Communal ecclesia squares well with the African faithful in general and Igbos in particular, where the zeal is to help to build up the kingdom of God on earth, God's family of all believers without discrimination of sharing in the life and blood relation of Christ - a 'phrase' that affirms the interrelationship of the role of the clergy and the laity and their unity in the one priesthood of Christ. "In ecclesiology, the principal ideas of the communal family are traced to creation by the same God, redeemed by the same Christ and called to the Catholic unity of one people of God"⁶⁵. For Charles Nyamiti, the communal ecclesia has to do with ancestral theology⁶⁶ - "descendance, blood relations, Adamite origin, brotherhood and parenthood, the Trinitarian Persons, the proto-ancestors of Christ, etc."⁶⁷. This is because the ancestors are foundational in every African community. As a communal ecclesia, it will help to project the close community relationship between the living and the dead, thereby demonstrating the essential collaborative structure that should prevail among the people of God's Family.

Vatican II speaks of the family of God as a "domestic Church" while the Synod calls it "the basic Christian communities"⁶⁸. As it were, it is in the family that we are called first of all and in a special way to live the values that Jesus preached in the world. As

63 G. Nnamani, *Op. cit.*, p. 50.

64 L. Doohan, "Church", in: M. Downey (ed.), *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1993, p. 168. For details on the changes on the ecclesiological Models in history see Hans Kûng, *Die Kirche*, München 1977, pp. 1-54 in G. Nnamani, *Ibid*, p. 50.

65 Cf L.G quoted by Card. F. Arinze, *Op. cit.*, p. 12.

66 Cf. C. Nyamiti, *Christ as Our Ancestor, Christology from an African Perspective*, Zimbabwe: Mambo Press 1984; Bén  zet Bujo, *African Theology in its Social Context*, Nairobi: St Paul Communications, 1992.

67 G. Nnamani, *Op. cit.*, p. 52.

68 Cf. Synod Message 27 & 28 in M. Brown (ed), *Op. cit.*

community of believers, family ought to be a model of what our life as people of God could be. For instance, in the third Eucharistic prayer, we ask God to hear the prayers of the family gathered before him and to unite all his children wherever they may be. To believe in God and to believe in ourselves as made in God's image and likeness is to have every reason to think of all people as our sisters and brothers. Suffice it to say that God's family as proposed for the Africans ought to live in communion with the whole Catholic Church ⁶⁹.

7. New model of ecclesia in communion with the universal Church

The word communion as used here, has to be considered in its dual facets – vertically, as it relates to the mystery of God and horizontally, as it relates to all men in their human relationship. “It is a spiritual call and is the Church's visible sign of the participation of all the believers in the divine life. Thus, the call that lies at the heart of Christian life is a call to communion as people of God. It is a call to share with all the members of God's family in communion with the Trinity. This is a communion that is the reflection of, and the participation in the mystery of the intimate life of love in God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit as previously treated. Communion is an ecclesial renewal from the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*) that gives a new meaning, a new understanding of the Church as People of God, designating democracy, egalitarian vision of the Church in the modern culture (LG 32). This figure “communion”, like “People of God”, is an appropriate biblical phrase that suits the definition of the *umunna* family ecclesia, especially, when it is applied culturally.

For effective ecclesial administration today, it is important to understand that the mission to the world and relationship with it cannot and should not be a cause of division in the Church between the clergy and the laity⁷⁰, rather a unity in service modelled after the Trinity. Trinity is communal, though a distinction of persons, but in closeness of unity that characterize its modus of existence. We observe the persons in constant and mutual relationship that reminds the faithful of the need for properly adjusted relationships in their communities.

⁶⁹ *Ecclesia in Africa*, N° 5 under family, p. 23.

⁷⁰ Cf. K. Kunnumpuram, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 1-11.

In the language of the Trinity, God as Father, Son and the Holy Spirit permeates all aspect of our religious life and belief as Christians and help to unite us together in worship. Our symbol of baptism, our sign of the cross and the application of the Creed are so structured after the model of the Trinity as a communal gesture. The Creeds spell out what we believe, following a Trinitarian structure. In them, we affirm our faith in God, the creator of the universe, in the Son, the Redeemer, and in the Holy Spirit, the Sanctifier. Christianity, by the virtue of its founder, Jesus Christ, who was himself a Jew, inherited the unalloyed belief of one true God from the Jewish religion. Thus, God did not only create the world, but became involved in it. John-Piere, a theologian, maintains that we do not believe in God the Father, the Son and the Spirit, but care less about the Trinity – they go together. Still, it does not change anything in the way we relate to God. He then concludes that such is the beauty and richness of the Christian faith, life of collaboration and love. Our God is a living, caring and loving Father. In the Eucharistic celebration, we offer prayer, praise and worship to the Father, in and through the Son, in the unity and power of the Holy Spirit – what a united family model! Our God is abundantly full of life. Though satisfied and content to Himself, He loves sharing and interacting as He interrelates in persons. This is the model of life and understanding His created beings are called to live in their spiritual day-to-day interactive activities in the spirit of unity.

Evidently, we need to foster union through mutual collaboration and free participation between the clergy and the laity as the model of the Trinity. To realize this vision, Vatican II has projected an ecclesiology of communion⁷¹. However, "People of God" was the main model in Vatican II; communion came as a later concept due to the movement of centralization of the power that was not compatible with the first model. Nevertheless, for the Council, the Church is a "community of faith, hope and charity" (*LG*, n. 8) and "a communion of life, love and truth" (*LG*, n. 9). The Triune God is the source and the pattern of ecclesial communion. Vatican II quotes with approval the words of St Cyprian that the Church is "a people brought into unity from the unity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit" (*LG*, n. 4). Like the Triune God, the Church is and will always be a unity in diversity⁷². In a more appropriate way, the Council states:

71 J. Thornhill, *Sign and Promise: A Theology of the Church for a Changing World*, London: Collins Liturgical Publications, 1988, pp. 206-209.

72 Quoted in K. Kunnumparam, *Op. cit.*, pp. 1-11.

As the firstborn of many brethren and the gift of his Spirit, he established after his death and resurrection, a new communion of kinship composed of all those who receive him in faith and love; this he did through his Body, which is the Church. Therefore, as a member, everyone, in one way or the other, would render mutual service according to the different gifts bestowed on each (cf. *GS*, n. 32).

As our working definition, we take communion as an understanding of the ecclesial interdependence, functional relationship of all the agents of evangelization: a collegial (a relationship) between the diocesan bishop and the priests, bishop and the laity within a local Church while maintaining episcopal collegiality with other Bishops and Pope within the universal Church. It means “shared responsibility” and a “partnership in governance” which involves the clergy and laity together working in collaboration⁷³. The constitution of the Church provides for a harmonious cooperation between the local and the universal Churches. “The parish priest is linked to his community; the bishop to his presbytery and to his fellow Bishops; the Pope to the communion of the Bishops”⁷⁴ and generally, all these work in collaboration with the laity.

It is the Eucharist that designates the presence of Christ that builds up the communal Church. And as such, the Church is present as a whole wherever Christ is and rightly celebrated in the Sacrament of the Eucharist that convokes all together. “It follows that just as Christ is not half but wholly present, the Church is wholly present wherever it is found. On that account, the local Churches have the whole reality of the Church not merely as a parcel cut out the whole”⁷⁵. The essential here is the preservation of the “essence” of the Christian message from one culture to the other. This is in full accord with God’s creativity, leading the different cultures to *katholike*, to universality in pluriformity, enabling each local Church to find its own identity and make its own specific and unique contribution to Church’s spirit of collaboration through a real *koinonia* (communion between the clergy and the laity)⁷⁶.

73 Thomas P. Rausch, *Priesthood Today: an appraisal*, quoted in the COCU *Consensus*, no. 22b, the fruit of Ecumenical discussion; in *Quest of a Church of Christ Uniting*, Gerald F. Moede, Princeton, COCU, 1985, *Op. cit.*, pp.121-122.

74 Cardinal J. Ratzinger, (now, Pope Benedict XVI), *The Nature And Mission of Theology*, USA-San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1995, p. 87.

75 *Ibid.*, p. 86.

76 W. Bühmann, *Courage Church*, New York: Maryknoll, 1978, pp. 48-49.

Realizing the fact that the emphasis of *Lumen Gentium* and *Ad Gentes* on the role of the laity working in collaboration with their pastors has not been much effective in Igbo Church due to its historical authoritarian structure of ecclesia that placed the role of the lay people at the last strata in the affairs of the Church, we are strongly emphasizing the importance of communality in the new communal ecclesial that elevates the status of the lay apostolate and relaxes every mind. “A certain idea of the Church produced a type of lay person who was too passive” (reference to the old ecclesial model). But the new option of “the Church-family is a Church of communion”⁷⁷ where all pastors are challenged to develop a pastoral program, in which the lay people rediscover their proper importance”⁷⁸. Thus, the “ecclesial family of God is oriented toward the building of society which she seeks to inspire by the spirit of the Beatitudes”⁷⁹. “The task of the faithful layperson, who through Baptism and Confirmation participates in the three great functions of Christ, priest, prophet and king, is to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world”⁸⁰.

To refer to a Church as a people of God helps to demonstrate the fact that it is not simply or primarily an institution but a community of believers. And within this community as God’s household, as it is true of any people, there is diversity of functions and ministries within a more comprehensive unity⁸¹. Rather, as a new ecclesial community, it has the opportunity for new experiences, for the life of faith within its cultural environment through the application of inculturation. It involves allowing the people’s participation not only on the liturgy but also in decision-making, committed to maintaining the Church and adding to its growth. This is easily realized in basic ecclesial communities that operate on lower scales. If this is practised from the people’s cultural view of communalism, it will make more sense for them.

The Vatican II Council through this way established a collegial understanding of the relationship of Bishops to one another and to the Pope, through mutuality and respect at general level. It projects a way of involving the laity both within and outside the Church (Cf. Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity). Relation of the local Churches and to

77 Cf, Synod’s Message: 20, 27, 28 in M. Brown, (ed.) *Op. cit.*, p. 84.

78 Synod Message, no 57 in M. Brown (ed.), *Op. cit.*, p. 84.

79 African Synod Message in Brown (ed.), *Op. cit.*, p. 84.

80 *Ibid.*, p. 84.

81 Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 9-10.

the universal Church unfolds (unity in diversity) an understanding of the Church as a communion or family of believers reflecting the early Christian community where people were living or trying to live a life of sharing. However, with this communion, each local Church (family ecclesia) or diocese represents the fullness of what it means to be a Church of its own level in union with the Church of Rome. Robert J. Schreiter summarized this well when he wrote:

All in all, these developments in re-envisioning the Church – as a mystery, not a perfect society; as a communion of communions, not a centre and periphery, not identified as the sole representation of the Church of Christ; with a place for the laity; and with renewed religious institutes – fundamentally, reshaped how the Roman Catholic Church might live in the modern world”⁸².

It is within our framework to present, in this dissertation, the continental image of the new proposed model ecclesial family of God within the spirit of *umunnarism*, which has to be expressed more meaningfully through the fruitful application of inculturation for its deep-rootedness. The effectiveness of this communality will depend to a large extent on the nature of leadership role.

8. Leadership style and the new model of ecclesia

The Synod Fathers of 1994 “gave a clear signal that the Church in Africa wishes to chart a new course for relational leadership. No doubt that the Synod Fathers were aware that the present style of being Church in Africa, as elsewhere in the Western world, is not only dominated by the clergy but is clericalised”⁸³. By adopting the model of the Church as a communal family of God, the African Church challenges itself to an examination of conscience. It is pushed to review its model of leadership and self-identity.

If the Church should be the family of God, particularly in Igboland, the picture of the clergy and the episcopate must look different⁸⁴. The Igbo Church leaders are therefore called upon to adopt the leadership style of the traditional community fathers, who, in

82 R. J. Schreiter, *The Impact of Vatican II*, in Gregory Baum, *The Twentieth Century*, New York: Orbis Books, Maryknoll, 1999, pp. 158-172.

83 E.E. Uzukwu, *Bulletin of Ecumenical Theology, The African Synod*, *Op. cit.*, p. 18.

84 Cf. Synod’s Message, nos. 24 & 25 in M. Brown, (ed.), *Op. cit.*, see also P. Hünemann, *Afrikanische Themen in Rom. Theologische Reflectionen aus europäischer Sicht*, 1994, p. 183.

anticipation of their eventful admission into the cult of ancestors, commit themselves to the life of truth and uprightness. This model calls in question, equally, the gap in the standard of living between some clergy and that of the poor faithful. The tolerance and collaboration, especially in religious and democratic affairs, which are typical of most African communities, can be worthy of emulation⁸⁵.

The interventions during the 1994 African Synod General Assembly indicated that the issues related to the laity and small Christian communities loomed large as new structural elements for an African ecclesiology. It is recorded that while the themes on priests and religious came up nine times each during the interventions, the laity and SCCs came up thirty and twenty seven times respectively. Of course, this great difference does not mean that the emerging lay people are as more important than the clergy or religious in the proposed new ecclesia. Instead of a major shift in direction, it could be rather seen as a major shift in concern⁸⁶. This includes working in collaboration with the laity, encouraging basic/small Christian communities and effort to maintain harmony and dialogue at all levels⁸⁷. This helps to project the fact that in the model of the Church as “communal family of God”, its “leadership” will no longer be expressed in authoritarian terms, but in relationship and in service to one another”. Authority or leadership is not power over people. It is a competence to liberate the bondage. Good leaders know that their authority is God-given to serve persons and help to design the possibility of

85 G. Nnamani, *Op. cit.*, p. 52.

86 Cf. E.E. Uzukwu, *Bulletin of Ecumenical Theology, The African Synod, Op. cit.*, pp. 18-19.

87 Cf. Lay people Must Be Empowered - Theological Institutes For The African Synod which maintains that: "Without this personal acceptance of the lifelong engagement to the Gospel message, the Church in Africa today could experience a fate similar to - or even worse - than that experienced in North Africa during the Islamic invasion. While the Church in Africa seems to be developing in terms of the creation of new dioceses, ordinations to the priesthood, and religious professions, alarming signs of a continuous exodus of our Catholic to join the African independent Churches, the new religious sects, Islam, and traditional religions abound. We interpret this as a clear indication that the laity do not yet succeed in meeting the various aspirations of the African people". In continuation, this document reminded the Synod Fathers of the vision of the Church according to the teaching of the Second Vatican Council, which includes, "1. The voice of the Laity must be heard; 2. Liturgy, as the re-actualization of the sacred, should be based on the Sacred Scriptures and on the patrimony of the Church. The Traditional African Values, enriched by African Symbols, music, and dance, should be introduced; 3. The Church as the People of God should be structured in such a way that it becomes evidence that authority is a charism of service and that the lay ministers - of both men and women - may receive their important and integral place; 4. The Synod should study all the African problems from an African perspective, such as matters concerning the structures of the Church, its discipline, marriage, the position of women in the Church and in society, and African traditional values...; 5. The Church should take very seriously the vision of the African people and its multi-dimensional impact on the life and environment of her Christians: an inculturated and vital spirituality, the relation between the Catholic faith and politics, the problems of social justice, religion and economics, dialogue and human rights, and Christians active in the Church as well as in society"; in Maura Browne, *Op. cit.*, pp. 55-57.

developing the potential of the persons entrusted to their care. Therefore, an effective leader is a mentor, a model, a designer, a developer and an enabler⁸⁸. The interventions also revealed a desire to have a new kind of clergy and a fresh type of ministry”⁸⁹. The Synod highlights the need for future African priests who will be trained, not only to be at home with the culture of their people, but also to have a true spirit of being the servants of the people after the model of Christ. In summarizing the practical differentiated functions of the agents of evangelization in relation to communal ecclesia family, we have this proposition to make according Lwaminda:

- (i) The Bishops bringing their charisms of leadership, inspiration, animation, encouragement and guidance based on authentic interpretation of the Gospel after having listened to the Spirit. They, therefore, bring the charism of decisions arrived at under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. They are among their people as those who serve.
- (ii) The priests bring their gifts of service, listening, encouragement, animation through God’s word, recognizing and eliciting the many and various gifts, which the Holy Spirit has given to each faithful. They serve their people and challenge them to take up responsibilities in the Church.
- (iii) The religious (men and women) bring their general charism of the call to holiness and to fraternal life in community and the particular charisms of their religious orders.
- (iv) The lay people bring their various gifts of: professionalism in various fields (in the Spirit of GS art 62 and LG art 37) financial support, managerial skills, political, economical, and social involvement experience, etc⁹⁰.

The above quotation represents the fact that though we are equal as Christians, and as individuals, we have different charismatic gifts and roles to play in the Church for the realization of a family common goal: the fulfilment of God’s kingdom on earth. The lay people contribute to the building up of the ecclesial community through their professional experiences as the Church today needs experienced economics, accountants and so on, in collaboration with the clergy. Therefore, the ecclesia family of God, as envisaged, is a challenging one where all hands must be on deck, meaning that the model has to be actually communal oriented.

9. The significance of the image of new model of communal ecclesia

The Igbo culture is rich with wealth of values such as the spirit of individual and collective participation for community services, solidarity will (*Igwe/umunna bu ike*),

⁸⁸ P. Lwaminda, *Op. cit.*, p.190.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 189.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 189.

sense of the sacred, supremacy of God as the Father and creator of all, etc. Igbo traditional religion regards the entire cosmos, when viewed in its totality, involving the invisible and visible realities, as sacred. This helps to show why respect is accorded to human being and sacred objects within *umunna*. As we saw earlier, this cultural communitarian view proceeds from the welfare, values and goals of the community which is not only supreme but also the base for the consideration of morality and social justice among Igbo people. Communalism in relation to the Igbos, has to do with “the welfare of man as a “being with”, “living and working with others” in a family close relationship that includes the living and the living dead, (cf. chapter four). The balance assessment of Igbo morality situates it in the context of the whole system of beliefs as expressed not only in the behavioural patterns of a number of individuals but also in the total frame work of the ways the people express themselves communally. It stresses the value of specifically communal and public goods and conceives of values as rooted in communal practices of the people. This is a great distinguishing factor with the Western conception of communion as previously treated. The “Western notion of communal family is the recognition of the fundamental need of relationship for the realization of person”. The emphasis is on the “absolute originality and concreteness of the human person – being-for-itself”⁹¹, the “I-ness”. The “I-ness is individualistically constituted before it choses to relate. But, the emphasis of the worldview of the Igbos is the reverse: the insistence is on the “relationship as essential to the constitution of the ‘I’. It will be difficult to understand an individual without the essential linkages to divinities, family, kindred and ethnic group”⁹² in Igboland.

Aquinas defines the Trinitarian concept in terms of “subsistent relationship”. Igbo culture sees persons as living in subsistence relationship which constitutes the base for *umunna* communalism. The communal ecclesia when animated by the Trinity develops her collaborative system of apostolate relevant to her culture and to the universal Church in general. Thus, relational *umunna* ecclesiology is human-Spirit-bound–ecclesiology that involves the living and the living dead as it presupposes an interrelationship of the communal members.

⁹¹ E.E. Uzukwu, *Healing Memories: The Church as agent of Reconciliation in the Service of the Kingdom*, in E.E. Uzukwu (ed.), *Bulletin of Ecumenical Theology – Christian Mission in the Third Millennium*, Nigeria-Enugu: Snaap Press Ltd., pp. 89-114.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 110.

Igbos live in community which does not diminish the growth of individualism, but rather enhances it as a being with others. While Descartes would say *cogito ergo sum* (I think; therefore I am), an Igbo man will rather say *cognatus sum ergo sum* (I am related; therefore I am). The *beingness* of an individual is much fulfilled within the community of *umunna*. Following the communal activities, the invisible penetrates the visible through a unique Being, especially in liturgical, social and administrative ways, which it can conveniently offer to the Church for the growth of faith as possible ways of realizing the practice of *umunna ecclesia* through inculturation. *Umunna* as earlier treated is very basic to the Igbos. By its nature, it is not just a mere concept, but an essential reality that concretizes the characteristics of Igbo community in its cosmic relatedness. In fact, in strict Igbo language, the words “cousin”, “aunt”, “uncle”, do not exist as such. One’s father’s brother is one’s father and one’s mother’s sister is one’s mother. The common words are “father”, “mother”, “brother” and “sister”. Therefore, in the Igbo context, family is very much extended. This is what Christianity is supposed to effectuate – unlimited extended family of God that should not have boundaries or ethnic distinctions, as we are of God’s one big Family. The identification and relatedness of the ecclesial communal family to the trinity helps to show the Fatherhood of God to all humanity. We then see clearly the redemptive role of Christ, the Proto-Ancestor of humanity, the New Adam, who unites the people of God, in the trinity through his blood. This process of *umunna ecclesia* will help to integrate the good cultural values, experiences and aspirations of the Igbo people to the big communal family of God. This model of *umunna ecclesia* would be a way to overcome the clericalism and individualism of operation that characterize the old ecclesia. What it means is that there must be an overhaul in the people’s way of being family of God in their relatedness, in their way of thinking, acting and feeling. “It is nothing shorter than ‘*decolonisation*’ of mind” and administration that involves a real change of heart and a real application of *umunna spirit*.

As we saw earlier, *umunna* in our context could be stressed from *umunne* (close family relations), through small *umunna* (village, clan, and etc.) to national or even international *umunna n’Christi* perspective - (members of Christ’s mystical body). The basic principle is however the same: communion among those who have the same communal existential relationship, particularly through consanguinity or religious affinity – (God is the Father of all mankind). These priceless values and qualities “are

providential preparationes for the transmission of the Gospel”⁹³, and they are enshrined in the culture of the people, lying latent due to the nature of the first evangelization that neglected most of the cultural values that should have been used for the effective propagation of the Gospel message. There is need for reconciliation between the inherited Christian religion and the traditional religion of the people through the application of dialogue and inculturation. For the deepening of the Christian faith, there is need for a model of the Church that responds to the challenges of today’s society.

There is a need for a Church that will not be divorced of good cultural values, a Church that will reconcile all agents of evangelization and commit them to the cultural life-system of communal collaboration and care. To deepen in Igboland the reality of the local Church, as advised by Pope John-Paul II, is the task of the institutional agents and framework of the whole of evangelization. This will help to show how the agents of evangelization should relate to one another in trust and love⁹⁴ as communal members of Christ body.

For instance, let us take the issue of festivals in Igboland that show community spirit. These are occasions in which “most people have the opportunity to establish extended *umunna* relationships”⁹⁵ that bear with the reciprocal bonds of social, political and religious relationships between the living and the departed ancestors who are part and parcel of the celebrating communities. These are cultural occasions for “commemorating certain events which are of vital importance to the celebrating community”⁹⁶. These are joyous events that are celebrated with specific aims. In Mbaisi, in Imo State of Nigeria, *Iri Ji* (the new yam festival) has become so prominent that every year, her sons and daughters living in different parts of the country will endeavour to come home to participate in this festival that opens the door for new yam harvesting, eating and marketing, a symbol of life sustenance and of life enhancer. It marks a respect and regard due to the earth deity, (*Ala*) the symbol of fertility. As it were, it is a homage paid to the

93 AMECEA, (ed.) *Post- Synodal Apostolic exhortation, Ecclesia in Africa* of the Holy father John Paul II, *Op. cit.*, p. 20 *Ecclesia in Africa*, N° 5 under family, p. 27.

94 Cf. T. Ishibangu, “*The Special Synod for Africa and African Theology*”, in E. E. Uzukwu (Chief editor), *Bulletin of Ecumenical Theology, The African Synod: Initial Results and Reflections*, Published by The Ecumenical Association of Nigerian Theologians, Enugu Snaap Press, 1996, pp. 15-24.

95 O. Onwubiko, *African Thought, Religion and Culture – Christian Mission and culture in Africa*, Vol.1. Nigeria-Enugu: SNAAP Press LTD:, 1991, p. 44.

96 Onwubiko, *Festival in African village life*, in *African Thought, Religion and Culture – Christian Mission and culture in Africa*, Vol.1., p. 43.

Supreme God, *Chukwu*, who is believed to operate through the minor deities, in this nature, the earth deity, *Ala*. God gives life and supplies his people with food, as He did to the Israelites in the desert. Ngwa people in Abia State of Nigeria also do celebrate *Ikoro* dance festival yearly, which is a symbol of conquest. It is a festival celebrated to mark the survival of the members and defeat of their enemies during inter-tribal wars. Majority of all the related members of this clan usually come home to participate in this communally cultural festival.

It is unfortunate that in this modern society, individual self-realization is trying to predominate and to take precedence over community stability. The career and happiness of individual members of the family triumph over the continuation of the lineage as a whole. Modernization is seen as the dissolution of the traditional structures, changeless and compact order. Sentiments here could be seen as a re-ordering of human priority in favour of the self. This is man's inhumanity to his fellow being these days. Moreover, the normal respect that is usually shown to the elders, the aged and the sacred is gradually dying down to some extent and the situation has "resulted in the loss of a decency and appreciation for human life"⁹⁷. Perhaps, those who have had negative experiences of family life might question the suitability of this model. But, to think of the negative societal challenges as the main objects to be inculturated into the new ecclesia is to be myopic to the reality of what we are trying to achieve. What the local culture will offer through inculturation would be the positive symbols of the "the life-giving experience", the relevant true values of *umunna* family life of communalism that will be pertinent for the propagation of the Gospel message. Nevertheless, such challenging situations will help to justify the fact that agents of evangelization would have to collaborate to face these existential problems facing today's mission in Igboland, just as Christ did with his apostles during his time.

The significance of this communal model of collaboration lies on the fact that Church in Igboland has to base itself on the firm foundation of the values of community living, sharing, simplicity of life-style and the extended family system that does not discriminate. As earlier stated, Igbo people need a Church "that bears witness to a different kind of the world. This is where we propose *umunna* ecclesia – the communal

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 43.

Church as a family of God”⁹⁸. Its significance is enormous, not minding the limitations due to the influence of modernism on the nature of today’s African family. However, with due consideration to the advantages of the extended family system and basic communities previously discussed, we have to present further the significance of the communal family ecclesia under the following subheadings: (1) to project the spirit of unity and (2) to appropriate the cultural life of the people.

9.1 To project the African spirit of unity

An important aspect of *umunna* family system that we have chosen in relation to the model of the Church-as-family is unity. This unity is expressed in the concept of the family: “one is formed to live concretely and authentically the experience of fraternity”, and there is the “spirit of disinterested service, solidarity, and a common goal”⁹⁹ as opposed to a self-centred syndrome of “my Church” policy. As we saw in the lives of the early Christian communities, they tried to live in unity and at the same time, expressed the truth of the message by calling the “Christian family” a “Domestic Church” or “Church of the Home”¹⁰⁰. Now, it is the turn of the African Church to share with the world-wide Church the marvellous vocation of realizing, first of all within herself, the unity of human kind over and above any ethnic, cultural, national, social or other divisions”¹⁰¹ in her continent.

Suffice it to say that our proposed ecclesia stands out clearly as a sign of that brotherliness which allows dialogue and collaboration to invigorate and sustain it. Such a mission apostolate requires in the first place that we foster within the family ecclesia the invincible respect for mutual esteem, reverence in purpose, and harmony in collaboration, through the full recognition of lawful diversity in nature. This means that all the agents of evangelization must engage in dialogue with ever-abounding fruitfulness as people of one family. “For the bonds which unite the faithful are mightier than anything that divides

98 E. E. Uzukwu, *Healing Memories: The Church as Agents of Reconciliation in the Service of the Kingdom* in Uzukwu (ed.) *Bulletin of Ecumenical Theology – Christian Mission in the Third Millennium, Globalisation and Reconciliation*, Nigeria: The Ecumenical Association of Nigerian Theologians, 1997, Vol. 9:1-2, pp.89-113.

99 Message 28, in Brown, *Op. cit.*, p. 77.

100 G. Foley, *Family Centered Church – a new parish model*, USA-Kansas City, MO: Sheed & Ward Press, 1995, p. 17.

101 *Ecclesia in Africa*, *Op. cit.*, p. 24.

them. Hence, let there be unity in what is necessary, freedom in what is doubtful, and charity in everything”¹⁰².

However, unity as presented here does not mean “uniformity but rather communion in diversity compatible with the Gospel¹⁰³: cultural differences, ethnic group differences, language differences, differences in opinions and spirituality in life, notwithstanding. What is important is the synthesis, the love of God that prevails, ability to work and relate together in Christ’s one mission.¹⁰⁴ In view of this, we shall handle this issue of unity under (1) in reconciliation of the Churches and (2) in reconciliation of peoples.

9.1.1 Unity in reconciliation of Churches

While dealing with collaboration within the Catholic Church, it is important also to touch briefly on its relationship to our separated brethren of other denominations as we all belong to God’s family. Through the spirit of one family of God, all Churches have to search out for Christian unity. The search for Christian unity is often impeded by “an institutional intransigence on the part of the Churches and a profound lassitude on the part of many of their members. But perhaps the greatest obstacle remains the fact that far too few Christians really long for reconciliation”¹⁰⁵. Many Churches today feel contented to remain as they are in their separate paths. But one thing is certain: that there are areas of common interest which dialogue could help people to be united together. Even if the word “dialogue” is too much in vogue these days and as such could be misunderstood, hence people prefer to use such words as “sharing” or “encounter”, etc., and other persons believe that relationships with others are part of what makes up being a person¹⁰⁶. The words of the Fathers of African Synod underscored the attention that must be paid to dialogue and co-operation with other denominations including African traditional religion

¹⁰² *Gaudium et spes*, No. 92.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, No. 92.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. John Paul II, message to Rwanda, in *L'Osservatore Romano*, English edition, Rome: Vatican Press Publication, March 14, 1996, Page n.a.

¹⁰⁵ P. Thomas, *Op cit.*, p. 47.

¹⁰⁶ M. Borrmans et al., “Interreligious Documents, Guidelines for Dialogue between Christians and Muslims”.

and with all who believe in God¹⁰⁷. Nevertheless, a liberal mind would always go for dialogue that reflects all aspects of human life. It is really necessary among all men to build up a society that is more humane, more conscious of common interest, more responsive toward the poor, in our societies and in the entire world. “It belongs constitutionally”, according to Cardinal Angel Suquia, “to the nature of the Church to be a sign and a sacrament, not only of the vocation of men to the intimate union with God, but also of their vocation to the unity of all mankind (Cf. Gal. 5: 1)”¹⁰⁸ where God is the Father of all.

Inter-religious sharing, as part of the evangelization mission, is just one of the actions of the Church in her mission *Ad Gentes* and it has retained its full force and necessity: God’s desires that all men be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth (I Tim. 2:4)¹⁰⁹. This could be inter-Christian or family communal reflection where people meet side by side at their daily toils or family gatherings, sharing their faith-commitment or evaluate it in the light of culture in which they live. This process does facilitate the purification and enculturation of faith¹¹⁰. This type of sharing does apply also in a family community gathering that is made up of different denominations: they occasionally come together and share some reflections from the bible. These are ways of living out God’s family ecclesia that is all embracing as Christ prayed for in chapter 17 of Saint John’s Gospel – may they be one.

Priests, by the virtue of their office and public ministers of the Church commissioned to act in Christ’s name, have a special responsibility to be ministers of reconciliation and maintenance of unity in a family of God. In Second Corinthians (2:19), Saint Paul reiterates the vital function of the apostles, like priests as ‘the ministers of reconciliation’. Thus, to create the consciousness of the ministry of reconciliation at all levels to the faithful awareness, the Synod fathers insist that priests should strive to maintain a healthy relationship with people of other denominations, even the Muslims by

107 Cf. M. Brown, (ed.), *Op. cit.*, See also Lumen Gentium, N. 1. quoted by Cardinal A. Suquia, *The New Evangelization: Some tasks and risks of the present*, in *Communio: International Catholic Review*, Published in Washington DC, 1992, pp. 514-546.

108 Cardinal A. Suquia, *Op. cit.*, p. 538.

109 Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter, *Redemptoris Missio*, 55, Apostolic Exhortation - *Ecclesia in Asia*, 31; see also Vatican II, *Ad Gentes* 7.

110 Cf. M. Zago, *Op. cit.*, p. 107.

always making dialogue their instrumental tool, the essence of which is to reconcile all people to God, people of the same ontological family.

9.1.2 Unity in reconciliation of peoples

Reconciliation, as a related issue to dialogue, collaboration and unity, does help others to recognize that divisions within and outside the Church today are not merely confessional, but individual differences. In a very real sense, the divisions resulting from poverty, racism, political oppression, the unequal distribution of wealth and power, and the lack of respect for the full spectrum of human rights in activities of collaboration are also expressed as the lack of unity of the Church¹¹¹. Following the application of the communal ecclesia family of God, Christians are called to a movement towards unity in collaboration, which transcends such divisions, as well as the alienation they cause to individuals or groups. And this will be easily implemented by the agents of evangelization who will now begin to see themselves as collaborators, all aiming at constructing and consolidating God's kingdom on earth, not only through dialogue and their life-styles but also through their prophetic homilies that should touch on these societal ills, whereby promoting oneness in the Lord.

The Synod Fathers maintain "an authentic democracy, which respects pluralism, as one of the principal routes along which the Church travels together with the people"¹¹². Generally the communal ecclesia would require respect for unity in diversity as one of the fundamental features of God's family. What is paramount here is the inter-relatedness of all categories of religious, civil-political and socio-economic human rights of all citizens. All sectors are for the building up of one unique and co-operate society of love and care. This implies that these rights are interconnected, and that respect for the set of rights is dependent on respect for the dignity of the other persons, clergy or laity. A genuine human "right" is only possible on the basis of the humanism of the other¹¹³.

111 P. Thomas, *Op. cit*, p. 48.

112 EIA 112.

113 Cf. R. Burggraeve, *From Self. Development to solidarity. An Ethical reading of human Desire in its socio-political relevance According to Emmanuel Livings*, Leuven, 1985.

As it were, pluralism is the foundation for what D. Hollenback refers to as “a transitional human rights ideology”¹¹⁴. This ideology is constituted for the respect for personality, a concept which implies that all human rights are interconnected. This interconnection of rights has become clear not just in theory but also in practice, a spirit of live and let live, which the Igbos regarded as *Egbe bere Ugo bere*. In this perspective, justice is conceived as rendering to all persons what is due to them in respect to relative rights and mutual duties as realised in the traditional extended family. It is then clear that one of the objectives of this project is to search out for the possible methods of approach to the problems and challenges posed by the consequences of the use of authority vis-à-vis social unity and stability of a multiple Igbo laity within the family ecclesia.

9.2 On the communal cultural life of the Igbos

The communal ecclesia as family of God would be relevant to Africans in general and the Igbos in particular putting into consideration the cultural life of the people as treated in chapter four. What it means is that the African Church, more especially the Igbo community, needs the teaching of the Vatican II on the matters of collaboration among the agents of evangelization by modifying and applying it within her cultural context through inculturation. This involves going through the process of renewal that considers fundamentally the essence of the Gospel message being witnessed in the light of the socio-cultural conditions of African continent. The “major shift to reconstruct the Church in order to make it bear witness credibly to the kingdom on the continent, must be done in deep collaboration and not in splinted isolation”¹¹⁵. “Monocracy, the sole rule of one person is always dangerous if not well applied, hence, the cultural system of administration could be of immense help here. Even when the person in question acts out of great ethical responsibility, he can stray into unilateral positions and become rigid”¹¹⁶.

Historical experience has shown that the best governmental administration is collegial or participative organs equipped with reciprocal checks and balances being guided by collaborative spirit of the extended family system. Family in Africa, which includes the Igbos, is seen as a wholistic system which is strongly determined by all the

114 D. Hollenbach, “*Global Human Rights*, 379.

115 E. E. Uzukwu, *A listening Church – autonomy and communion in African Churches*, New York: Orbis Books Publication,, 1996, p. 102.

116 Ratzinger, *Op. cit.*, p. 86.

members who are highly committed to one another in communal service. It is communal oriented instead of individual oriented. Following the advent of the early missionaries, Africa has been Christianized; now, what we want is to “Africanize Christianity” within her local Churches through the instrumentality of the agents of evangelization.

An ecclesial family system underlying all the activities of our discussion as involved in its mission, is meant to foster two basic realities in view of its collaborative spirit: an experience of love and an experience of faith-commitment. Such is basic for Igbo spirit of communalism. The essential factor that keep every family together irrespective of crisis and disagreements is that members understand that they are loved and cared for, and that they, in turn, love and care for others within the extended family system of *umunna*. What it means is that there is a need to create a family spirituality that is built on strength, on communalism. To do this, there is need to deep into the cultural life of the people to learn from their spirit of extended family system, where they manifest strong and healthy human relationships in the life of communalism, life of sharing and life of sacredness.

Good spirituality will help the members to know what is happening within the inner circle of the ecclesial family, like a periodical evaluation of communication system, emotional support and trusting relationships at all levels. As it were, family environment as expected in our new ecclesia has to foster open and honest system of collaboration through effective communication system. As previously discussed, members perceive themselves as a family of “we-mentality” as opposed to “self-directing will system” that fragments and breeds unhealthy rivalry. In the new ecclesia, the existing relationship of members to the entire family of God needs to be functional through the spirit of complementarity and selfless sacrifice. By application, such is necessary for the Igbo family ecclesia where people are meant to think and work together for a common goal. The ecclesia anticipated, like the early Church that was understood primarily as *communitas fidelium*, the community of the faithful, has to operate with the active participation of all the members in building up the mystical body of Christ, the focus and cue of their activities.

The second basic principle that should be a watchdog in our new ecclesiology is faith-commitment. What is the meaning of this community of faith-commitment? It is really important that the ecclesial community deepens the essential values of Christianity, fraternity, mutual care, solidarity, active participation and collaboration in what concerns the propagation of faith. This also involves sharing of information, dialogue at all levels, grass-root decision-making, and so on. It is then necessary that spirituality of faith be fostered, one of adherence to Jesus Christ made present in the community and adherence to the Holy Spirit present in the various services or charisms, thereby, creating deep and lasting expressions of faith that will sustain the life of the people¹¹⁷. Members of the new ecclesial family have the responsibility to acknowledge their responsibility in the communal ecclesia and keep to it faithfully. As a community of believers, the teaching of God becomes more real to us when we endeavour to keep and to share our faith-commitment in collaboration through the use of our charisms. The spirit of sharing helps to effectuate our individual responsibilities in the Church.

This means that God has to be found in our everyday activities, irrespective of our functions. One thing is to have faith and another thing is to acknowledge or to trust in it whether in oneself or in others. Many members need cooperative guidance from others who care about them and who have the gift to share. The spirit of collaboration helps members to share their talents and sorrows together. By faith, we are caught up into Jesus' Paschal Mystery. We pass from slave to freedom, from sin to purity of heart, from hate to love and from judgmental attitude to reconciliation through the spirit of communalism. In line with our interviews, we have the following proposals as pertinent for the new ecclesia:

- A spirit of love and concern for all the members at all levels;
- The ability to make the members of the community feel belonging, comfortable and at ease with one another;
- The ability to discern the will of God in decision making and where possible, to ensure a fair representation of all group members, clergy and laity alike on matters of faith;

¹¹⁷ L. Boff, *Church: Charism and Power – Liberation Theology and the Institution of the Church*. New York: Crossroad Publication, 1985, p. 134.

- A spirit of communalism that encourages free exchange of compliments and unalloyed appreciation;
- Community members who communicate freely and share talents with interest and care;
- The ability of the members (both clergy and laity) to develop a listening skill;
- The ability to handle the diocesan and parish controversial issues amicably without making anybody an escape goat;
- The acknowledgment of leadership role as a service;
- The ability to affirm the worth of others without mixed feelings;
- Responsibility and the sense of faith-commitment among the members;
- Communal ecclesia that has a high degree of unity in diversity that is centred around the life of Christ;
- Collaborative spirit of responsibility and selfless effort to understand the others point of views.

In view of the above, we want “a Church which fosters the bonds of communion and congeniality”¹¹⁸. This is important because, as we have earlier explained, the life of Igbos is by its nature communal and, as such, it is not something imported or a novel theological idea in Africa. Rather, it is embedded in its cultural life as has been illustrated earlier. A practical example here is a “decision making” in Igboland in any of her case settlements which involves consultations of different unit clan members that will be represented by the first sons called *Ndi Isi Opara* who will be convoked on several occasions by the eldest man of the village to look into the case on stages, just as we speak of first, second and third hearings in our modern courts today. Even before the second sitting of the traditional general assembly, each head of the clan will, in turn, consult his own family members for their collective contribution on the matter, which helps to furnish him with the opinion of his people as he will be representing them in the bigger clan assembly. Also in the assembly of this nature, the chairman, who is normally elected by the community of the elders due to his natural and acquired wisdom to lead *umunna* (or could be the oldest in the clan), will give each member representative who wishes to speak a chance to express himself on the topic for discussion before a group of people

118 Cf. A.E. Orobator, *The Church as Family – African Ecclesiology in Its Social Context*, Kenya: Paulines Publications, 1999, p. 35.

among them are selected to go out and look into the matter and to present the possible solution that will serve as a consensus resolution that will be binding.

When the selected group has done its job, which takes into consideration all the views of the people and the pros and cons of the discussion, one of them relates this to the assembly and the chairman makes the last statement based on the findings of the *Izu* group. What a collaboration in action! It will be presumptuous for anyone to negate or challenge the commonly accepted Igbo notions of communality and interrelatedness. Unarguably, these notions or values exemplify the common identity of the people who make decisions and unanimously stand on them and nobody among the members can decide to back out as they all contributed to the decision taken. Carrying out such a venture like a decision of clearing the roads by the community members, everybody comes out and participates freely and happily without bearing grudges in mind. Those who would not make it due to ill-health or cases of indisposition, normally buy wine (a jar of *Mmanyà Ngwo*) and send to the workers as a mark of solidarity-will. These are values that are lacking these days due to the nature of today's community, to some extent. In the present African ecclesia these attitudes need to be changed and updated with practical communal systems of operation on Church and social activities. Based on these values, we insist that the metaphor of communal family ecclesia readily appeals to all Africans in today's missiology, especially the Igbos.

However, realizing the multicultural divergences of Africa as a continent, its common values, as pointed out above notwithstanding, we have to understand that local identities and loyalties do exist. In the language of Orobator, they are called "ethnocentrism, tribalism or restricted love", which if not considered in the nature of universalising phenomenon of the values in a vest Africa, may constitute problems to our consideration of ecclesia family as it is not limited to the Igbos alone. In trying to resolve this, we have two possibilities: firstly, "there is need to foster an understanding of the Church which takes seriously the localized nature of the Church Affiliation" as our main concern is Igbo. In other words, Igbo ecclesia, which is the base of our thought here, must learn to consider her traditional system of functioning so as to keep everybody in his/her place. The reason is that the local ecclesiology cannot afford to underestimate the influence of such a traditional mood of operation among the community people who also constitute the members of the Church. Secondly, this task focuses on the need to develop

models of Church in Africa in general, and Igbo in particular, which will help to facilitate a dynamic relationship between the competing localized loyalties in order to free the idea and experience of Church from the narrow binds of ethnic or tribal affiliations and allowances¹¹⁹. What is important here is that there is urgent need for a sound and praxiological theology that will take care of all the divergences in cultural values and practices. This will rather be seen as an outcome of unity in diversity perspectives.

10. Conclusion

In this essential chapter of our dissertation, we have pointed out the characteristic nature of the communal family model ecclesia and its relevance in the universal Church and to the continent of Africa. We also highlighted the similarities between the African family model and the Divine family that has the Trinity as the base. This, to a certain degree, would be of a great help toward a better self-understanding of the Church in Africa in general and Igboland in particular through the spirit of communalism.

However, it is important to note here that the concept of family in Africa is not all that perfect or without its problems, especially, within the modern period. These days, we have families with authoritarian parents who go to the extreme by using firm commands devoid of considerations to restrict their children's behaviour. Such Parents rely on coercive technique rather than reasoning and dialoguing. At the other extreme are uninvolved or neglectful parents who are uncommitted to their parental role and emotionally detached from their children. Such parents attach much priority to their own needs and performances than their children. They look uninterested in events of the general need. In between the two extremes, are the authoritative parents who expect their children to participate and behave in a mature fashion. They use rewards more than punishments, create time to listen to their children and encourage the Spirit of dialogue with them. They are said to be supportive and warm in their day to day interaction with their children. In this way too, they end up producing children who display confidence, self-control, independence and maturity, achievement orientation and very co-operative with others. Unlike children from authoritarian or uninvolved parents who usually appear unhappy, aggressive, always dependent, low on self-reliance, lower self-esteem lack of

119 Cf. A.E. Orobator, *Op. cit.*, pp. 35-36.

creativity and greater alcohol consumption¹²⁰ - caused by modern societal influences. Like every other human family, African family has her problems which the family ecclesia will have to face as a challenge. However, we are mainly concerned with the good values the families can present and not the vices. Thus, the image of the Church we are referring to, is not the type where the father of the family is “all and all” or rules with harsh command; nor do we refer to a family system where a child whims and does not listen or take helpful instructions from the parents. No, to think of this is to miss completely what this dissertation wishes to communicate. The family envisaged here, has the following characteristics that summarize our discussion in this part:

- Where all know and accept each other and feel at home;
- Where people pray and share the word of God together;
- Where everybody is welcome to contribute his or her gifts and talents;
- Where we are concerned with the life of other dioceses and of the whole Catholic Church;
- Where we must work at it with patience and determination;
- Where the spirit of collaboration exists in function sharing;
- Where the father of the family (Pater familias) knows and carries out his leadership role as a servant in the spirit of Christ;
- Where clergy and laity work in harmony and in love¹²¹.

As members of God’s family, the above enumerated functions are practically realizable through a community of love that works within cultural, ethnic and ideological perspectives; community that should allow its individual and communal life-styles to stand as evidence of evangelization and as good ambassadors of Christ on earth.

We have seen in our discussion that the Living God, Creator of Heaven and Earth and the Lord of history, is the Father who created human family to which we all belong as members. He wants us to bear witness to him through our respect for the faith, religious values and traditions of each person¹²². “But for such a Church to exist, we must have priests and lay people who live their lives as a vocation to spiritual paternity, Christian families that are authentic, domestic Churches, and ecclesial communities that are truly living”¹²³. In view of this, we insist that the agents of evangelization in the new

120 Cf D. Bukatko & M.W. Daehler (eds) *Children Development, A Thematic Approach*, 3rd edition, New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1998, pp. 461-495.

121 Cf. *Ecclesia in Africa*, *Op. cit.*, see also Archbishop Ezeanya, “*The tradition Igbo Family and the Christian Family*” in C. B. Okore (ed.) *The Igbo Church and Quest for God*, Nigeria: Pacific Press, 1985, pp. 53- 68.

¹²² M. Brown, *Op. cit.*, no. 22, p. 76.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, p. 77.

ecclesia will be people who have the spirit of God in mind as this is planted in the core of the culture and follow it with selfless love and dedication through collaboration.

The tendency in the historical missiology “has been to present the Gospel as if it is only being filled into empty vessels. The Gospel of Christ however is basically incarnational, working in the human contexts and utilizing the human situation creatively and meaningfully”¹²⁴. In the present day ecclesiology, this approach is relatively well considered in contemporary inculturated missiology. But as the pre-Vatican II model of ecclesia still exists, the same old problem of domination and subjugation continues to prevail unabated in Igboland missionary activities instead of utilization of cultural contextual values.

The people of Igboland must understand and serve God in their contextual and experiential reality. God must speak through their own medium and experience. Unless this is accomplished, the Christian faith will continue to be superficial and artificial, even when it overly seems to be successful. The Gospel must take seriously the context into which it is being planted if it is to become natural and permanent. Traditional theology based on the Western interpretation of the Gospel will not be adequate in dealing with the theological necessities of the Africans in general. Africans themselves must boldly make their own interpretation of the Gospel, challenge the African Church to be truly African and refuse to continue to be a carbon copy of other people’s theologies in the guise of orthodoxy. “Africans must not only theologize, they must also push for the implementation of African theology for the Church in Africa whether or not they are ‘allowed’ by those who claim to be the right interpreters of the Christian Gospel”¹²⁵. We conclude here that Africans, particularly the Igbos, must reject the “Christianity of imitation” and copying of other traditions and develop an African theology and traditions which respect and utilize her cultural world-views to foster evangelization¹²⁶. What is important here is that there is urgent need for a sound and praxiological theology that will

¹²⁴ D. W. Waruta, (The Secretary of the Association of theological Institutions of Eastern Africa, and a member of the African Theological Symposium and a regular participant in the endeavours of EATWOT) “*Meaning of Mission Ministry in Africa Today*” in Francesco Pierli MCCJ et al., (eds.), Missionary Ministry and Missiology in African Today, Kenya: Paulines Publications, 1994, pp. 37-44.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 37-44.

¹²⁶ D. W. Waruta, *Op. cit.*, p. 37.

take care of all the divergences in cultural values and practices. This will rather be seen as an outcome of unity in diversity perspectives.

PART THREE INTERVENTION

TOWARDS AN INTEGRATED EDUCATION AND INCULTURATED COLLABORATIVE COMMUNAL ECCLESIA MINISTRY

To be 'transformed by the renewal of our minds' (Rom. 12:2), we need a diagnosis or psycho-analysis to pin-point the causes that hinder the renewal: outside influences, replaced images and symbols, limited responses, wrong choices and poor dialogue systems, name them, that restrict our vision of communication and faith-commitment, at times, lead us to false trials and poor results. However, a step begins a journey of thousand miles. So far, within the limited scope of this presentation, we have succeeded in exposing the actual collaborative situation of the Nigerian-Igbo Church today in the first part of this work, (in the analysis), coupled with the existing nature of inculturation, therein.

In the second part, we concentrated on the anthropological, missiological, theological and historical reflections that gave insight to our understanding of the Pre-Vatican II ecclesiology and the Post-Vatican II mission. We ended up proposing the model of ecclesia: *umunna* communal Church as family of God in view of our problem of ecclesiology that needs to be improved in Igboland.

In this phase, part three, we shall try to see how our reflection will help us to handle the existential problems as discovered in the analysis and interpretations, which are poor collaboration and lack of inculturation of the Gospel message. To meet up with these challenging problems that hinder effective pastoral collaboration and communal participation in the Nigerian-Igbo Church and Africa in general, this part of our dissertation consecrates chapters that will be responsible for the nature of formation, presentation of ways the agents of evangelization have to operate to maintain healthy collaboration and the systematic pastoral inculturated ministries that are appropriate for the people's cultural life.

CHAPTER VIII

RELEVANT EDUCATION REQUIRED FOR THE FORMATION OF THE FUTURE EVANGELIZERS IN THE NEW PROPOSED ECCLESIA

The excessive hierarchical set-up in seminaries needs to be abolished. This may not be possible with regards to the hierarchy of functions like the priestly function, deacons function, professors' duties, etc. However, the hierarchy of status which breeds a domineering spirit ought to be done away with at all stages of formation... The study of both philosophy and theology in the major seminaries needs to be culture bound. African Traditional Religions and cultures ought to be the spring-board of philosophical and theological studies. For theology to be faith seeking, it needs to reflect this faith in the context of the African situation now. This is the only way it will be relevant to the people of this age...Seminary formation ought to be given an African thrust in: the lectures, liturgy and general life. Lectures can be given in the language of the ethnic group where the seminary is situated. The tendency, so far, has been to maintain the use of foreign languages, forgetting that the Formator of all formators, Our Lord Jesus Christ, used the local language of his people to form the first seminarians, the Apostles¹

This quotation helps us to understand the need for a review of our seminary formation as the above statement comes from a Professor in one of the Igbo major theological Institutions. Unnecessary emphasis on hierarchical structure and authoritarian domineering spirit that affect the nature of formation, will not be of any help in our formation houses. Relationship is a sharing of life and every human person needs it. Relationship grows through mutual co-existence which takes place where there is trust, love and confidence. *"I am because we are and since we are therefore I am"*². This is the base for African spirit of communalism. When we speak of the communal ecclesia as a family of God, we presuppose a mutual spirit of interrelationship of the members; and such should be a priority in our houses of formation. This should guide the principles for our seminary formation as a "training-family-house of God". Family is a community of relationship and so must it be in our seminaries in Igboland.

In the last chapter we presented the proposed new communal ecclesia that would be relevant to the cultural life of the people in Igboland. It is our conviction that a well inculturated ecclesiology will help a lot in dealing with the teething challenges to pastoral evangelization that involve the clergy and the laity in relation to our analysis and

¹ A.N.O. Ekwunife, *Integration of Traditional African Values in Priestly Formation*, quoted in AFER African Ecclesial Review, vol. 39, n. 4, 1997, page n.a.

² J.S. Mbiti, *African Religion and Philosophy*, London: Heinemann Press, p. 108 in C. McGarry and P. Ryan (eds.), *Inculturating the Church in Africa*, Kenya-Nairobi: Kolbe Press, 2001, p. 229.

theological reflections. The synthesis of the whole line of thought is the importance of collaboration, expressed through dialogue and inculturation that should be realized within the cultural milieu of the Igbos. Following the existential situation, it is not enough to propose these factors as possible solutions to the real incarnation of the Good News in Igboland of Nigeria, the most challenging issue is the nature of the structural ecclesiology that will determine the necessary pedagogic approach for the formation of the agents of evangelization. What this means is that for such a new ecclesia to exist, we need to produce priests “who live their priesthood as a vocation to spiritual paternity, Christian families that are authentic, domestic Churches, and ecclesia communities that are truly living”³. The formative place for such local effective ecclesiology and the nurturing of the spirit of communal collaboration is supposed to be in our seminaries. But fundamentally, (as earlier analysed) most of the problem we are dealing with, especially the problem of ecclesiology that is expressed through poor collaboration due to the use of authority, of hierarchy and of undepended knowledge of the culture in view of pastoral challenges, could be accounted for, to some reasonable extent, owing to the nature of formation in our seminaries. This involves a new method, a realistic approach that will conveniently apply the proposed theories into action. This method will be realized through proper and relevant education of the propagators of inculturation within the formation system. It is somehow a long project, but it is important for effective progress to be made in relation to qualitative and contextual education. Effort should be made to train the mind and this begins with the principle of giving them early qualitative education. The aim here is to improve the actual system of formation that breeds individualistic personalities instead of those who have the spirit of communalism.

Moreover, due to the nature of authoritarian spirit of training, many of our seminaries end up producing the same nature of candidates who, after their ordination, transfer their aggression to parishioners (the lay people), who are already on the suffering side. It is not easy to begin with the already ordained or the pastors of the Church in view of our described challenges, but through their continual education, they will also profit in this proposition which should be in line with the new ecclesia. In this perspective, this work will be meaningful in its approach. This is where we have chosen to present this study under the following subheadings: (1) Relevant contextual inculturation of certain values of African tradition, (2) conceptual framework for a new model, (3) the teaching

³ Message of the African Synod, No. 25 in M. Brown (ed.), *The African Synod, Documents, Reflections, Perspectives*, New York: Maryknoll, Orbis Books'Publication, 1996, p. 77.

process, (4) the learning process, (5) situational application, (6) evaluation and (7) conclusion.

1. Contextual inculturation of certain values of African traditional religion

We observed in the previous chapter that most models used in the Church, both theologically and ecclesologically, are still too pre-Vatican II and Eurocentric oriented. Moreover, till today, many Christians in Igboland tend to live a double life of being loyal to Christianity as well as to African traditional religion that is the base of their cultural life, especially, when there are crises; and when there is less regard to sacredness and respect for personalities, etc. The world under which the faith is preached is a world of cultural diversity and not of cultural monolith. Hence, St. Paul, being sensitive of this, while preaching God to the people of Areopagus, sought for a meeting ground between the religious world-view of the Athenians and the Christian message that he presented to them as explained in chapter seventeen of the Acts of the Apostles. The early Church Fathers (the Apologists) searched for relevant contextual term to present the Gospel message in an intelligible way to the Hellenists, hence, the use of *Logos and Pneuma*, to show the “manifestation of the transcendental God through His Son, (*Logos*) who is the Creator, Revealer, and Saviour”⁴. The Christian tradition as previously treated has always been involved in a creative dialogue through inculturation with different cultural localities that receive the faith and the same should be the case in Igboland.

We are yet to give the Gospel message the honour it deserves in Igbo culture. Significantly, this has to do with the question of method. It requires a new hermeneutical and cultural approach to the bible and to Christian theology as inherited. Our notion of theology, which is western as pointed out above, has been dominated by what Paul Bekye calls “university model” – perhaps, academic oriented. What this means is the type of Christianity that “appeals too much to the intellect and very little to the emotions”⁵, spiritual life of the people, knowing that human beings are more than just intellect I agree with Paul Bekye (an African theologian) that “it has been a question of laying emphasis on clarity of Christian doctrines, its precise formation and expression, and its relation to other bodies of knowledge, but maintaining far less emphasis on establishing relationships with

⁴ Paul K. Bekye, *Pathways Towards A Contextual and Inculturated Theology in Africa*, in K.A. Aniagwu (ed.), *West African Journal of Ecclesial Studies*, Nigeria-Ibadan: AECAWA Publication, 1992, p. 46. See Also St John's Gospel, Chapter 1: 1-5, Proverb, 8: 22-31.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

the socio-cultural situations of the people”⁶. This “scholastic system of theological manuals that is still largely the case in seminary training today”⁷ should be revealed for a better contextual relevant doctrine of theology.

The dialogue process will help the evangelizers to build on what people already know and uphold as valuable, as it is actually one of give and take that requires a true exchange which leads to creative integration between the Christian faith and the traditional culture of the people. As traditional religions are “the means through which God makes himself known to the people, and are therefore the channels of His grace, these considerations are necessarily call for the incorporation into the theological treatise of adequate courses in the theology of religions as the bases for contextual theology”⁸ in Igboland. As the study of African traditional religion is presently “treated as an isolated discipline without any relationship whatsoever with the systematic theological treatise”⁹ in our theological Faculties and Seminaries, effort has to be made to give more priority to it. In “truly inculturated venture, African traditional religion has to be made to enter into profound dialogue with the Christian theological tradition in order to provide the necessary basis for a local theology that would be adequately contextualized”¹⁰, while at the same time, being rooted in the Christian tradition and open to the universal Church, as well as to the religious experiences of other Christian communities.

For instance, we have the issue of ancestral title, problems of the relevance of the Igbo family model in Christian communities, “re-incarnation” (repeater children) or “demonic possession”, polygamy, etc, all of which are very rampant in Igboland. Among others, such themes as the real Igbo conception of God and intermediaries, of the sacred and respect due to it, extended family system, use of symbolism, proverbs, prayer, communalism, nature of administration, *ozo* title, etc within the African worldview are to be encouraged for deepened theological studies. We just mention them here, a good number of them have been treated in the previous chapters and also will be handled as an aspect of intervention in chapter ten.

In Igbo worldview as previously treated, “family for what it symbolizes is sacred because it reflects wholeness in unity of being” as it involves the living and the living

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

dead Ancestors. Human beings as God's created images are sacred because of their vital link with transcendental realities of the world in its wholeness. "Certain persons, objects and places are sacred because they manifest this wholeness of being either symbolically or in actuality". "In Igboland the sacred is manifested not so much by separation as by unity", life in communalism. The sacred is not only associated with power or traditional priests or elders, but it is also "affiliated with the highest values in human life such as: respect, honesty, justice, gentleness, patience, endurance, perseverance, sincerity in one's word, etc". A sacred person is expected to mirror these values in his life-style. "There is no doubt that the emphasis on the cultural sense of the sacred has far-reaching effects in the formation of Catholic seminarians. It will create in them an attitude of deep respect for the things of God and anything associated with God like the liturgy, devotions, studies, created fellow beings, etc". It will help to guide the relationship between the clergy and the laity.

Moreover, the sense of the sacred will help, not only on the respect of human dignity, but also to maintain a communal family spirit in our houses of formation. The formators will be expected to create this spirit by a change of attitude in their method of teaching and relationship with the students. "They ought not to distance themselves from the students. Rather they have to win the latter's confidence at all levels as they share life together"¹¹. "Decisions on vital matters must be taken after prolonged dialogue and consultations on both sides. The sense of communal spirit has to prevail. No student should be expelled for expressing his candid opinion on matters affecting his welfare"¹². The new proposed ecclesiology will function well with an appropriate type of seminary formation. This process will involve a review of the teaching methods in most of the Igbo seminaries in Nigerian, which many of our elites regard as being largely "theoretical" and "speculative", slow to change and enwrapped with "authoritarian Pre-Vatican discipline".

2. Proposed conceptual framework

Since the existing curriculum in seminary schools is based on the exigencies of religion and faith, handed down from past generations, there may be the need to review some of the curriculum contents in order to reach harmony between seminary education and the dynamic needs of the society in view of our new proposed ecclesiology that lays

¹¹ A.N.O. Ekwunife, *Op. cit.* Page n.a.

¹² *Ibid.*

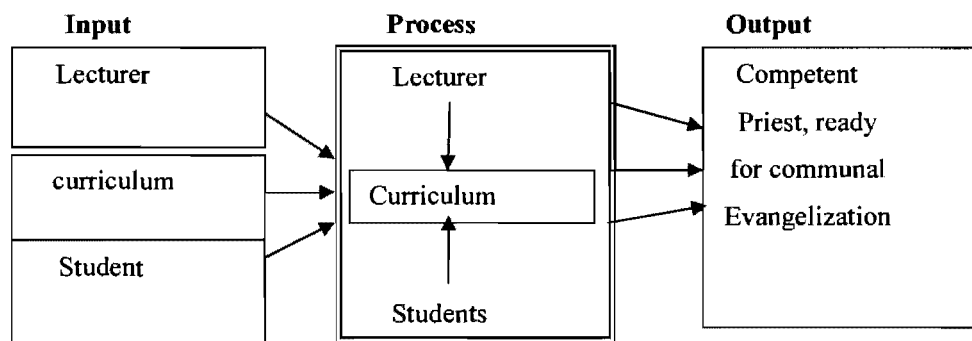
emphasis on communalism. But, on seminary teaching method, in view of the given curriculum therefore, there is a call for its review in order to integrate the dynamic demands of the society the seminarians are meant to serve. The quality of such graduates should reflect the relevance of the societal needs for which they are being trained. This means that their competence in problem solving, pastoral skills and the ability to deal with the pressure of intense needs of society communally should be paramount in formation training. Through this way, the act of caring and nurturing with an aim to achieve inculturation will become more easily and effectively implemented.

Our review of the literature, the presentation of theories and the theological expositions above which have looked at the aspects of pastoral challenges and the relevance of teaching methods that can help to meet these challenges, will ultimately serve as a design of our conceptual framework. It will therefore help in the construction of our measuring instrument that aims at correcting the notion of poor collaboration and poor output in formation for cultural evangelizers in the seminary system. There is always the need to maintain a good harmonization of the chosen variables within the context.

2.1 Relationship of variables

Our concept of pastoral competency in our proposed new ecclesia in this study is viewed in terms of relevance of education that aims at achieving the deserved goal of producing a competent priest (our out-put) within a healthy and stressless environment, considering our actual seminary formation problems. In this study, there are three inputs that are fixed by design and policies of the seminary system. These are the “lecturer”, the “curriculum” and the “student”. Just to elaborate more on this, the lecturer is appointed by the seminary administration (the Bishops), on grounds of his competency and his ability to impart knowledge and good morals. The student, on the other hand, is given admission into the seminary because he has academic and moral qualifications to be admitted for priestly formation. Lastly, we have the curriculum, which is fixed at a higher policy decision level for the realization of the quality of clergy for the Catholic faith. This leaves us with the “process” and the “output”. Before we go further in our elaboration of these two other stages, let us take a look at the illustration below in order to have a clearer understanding of the whole educational structure we are aiming at.

Formation: Input and Output Processes



As pointed out above, the three input variables are fixed and there is very little we can do to change them. However, looking at them within the process stage, we find that although the curriculum remains fixed (after the accepted contextual modifications), the lecturer and the students become the variable factors. The lecturer, as a variable, is viewed in this study in terms of the “teacher-mind-set” that determines his view of the goal of curriculum that has an effect on his teaching style and on the learning process. It is on the basis of these mind-sets of the curriculum that we examined our study of the type of teacher mind-sets inherent in the regimental authoritarian teaching style that most seminary professors in Nigeria inherited from colonial missionaries and which have persisted over the generations. We, therefore, look at such mind-sets, their inherent teaching styles and their potential impact on the formation process, as a reflection of pastoral challenges that demand a thorough preparation of the graduating seminarians.

Nevertheless, we have to understand that different attitudes, social backgrounds, cultural differences and other student attributes that make him a unique individual with unique learning styles and abilities, constitute determining factors in the studies. The student in this study is, therefore, viewed as a variable, whose achievement depends, to a greater extent, on the teacher’s capability of meeting the goal coupled with his ability to hit the expected standard, which is a set target, the process. In other words, justification of this target-point will depend to a greater extent, on the teacher and the student, who are called to make a frank effort to hit the “jack-point”, the process. However, we should not overlook the fact that the set up curriculum has to be relevant to the purpose of study. What it means is that the curriculum has to include cultural courses based on African

traditional religion. This presupposes that a relented effort on any of the two variables (the teacher and the student) will consequently lead to short expectations and poor performances which may be negatively attributed to both of them. Our hypothesis in this study will base its arguments on the two variables within the process as stated below. This means that the teacher's mind-sets (his style) have an effect on the performances of a seminarian's ultimate competence in fieldwork. However, the complement of this is the positive disposition of the student to follow the formation in view of his cultural background, through the help of the curriculum.

2.2 Independent and dependant variable

Teacher's mind-set, as we have already explained above, affects his view of the purpose of the relevance of education and the methodological approach (teaching-style) to accomplish this. On the other hand, a student's view of the teacher and the teaching process affects his concentration and ultimate competence in his profession.

Following the framework pattern as presented here, the ultimate goal of quality formation, viewed in the form of a competent contextual priest, depends greatly on the process. If we have to produce a competent priest in view of existential challenges of poor collaboration, we have to concentrate our efforts on the process of forming such a priest and that is where our attention is focused. This involves the need for surveying avenues for changes to be brought into the pedagogical system in our seminaries, in terms of adoption and the possibility of inter-mixing the different styles of teaching and learning. Effort, too, will be made to ascertain the extent to which democratic and *laissez faire* styles of teaching and learning could be useful for the "incarnation" of the "Gospel message" through collaboration among the teachers and students and the proper application of liturgical inculturation in the seminary institutions in Igboland particularly. We start by presenting the teaching process in the light of existing theories in education.

3. Teaching approaches for relevance of education

Teachers often teach concepts, not for the sake of the concepts themselves, but rather for the usefulness that those concepts have in helping the students to better understand and deal with their world¹³. Such a statement spells out the ideal situation, as it should be, which more often than not, does not happen. Different teachers pose different mind-sets,

¹³ Cf. J.E. Ormond, Education Psychology, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1998, p. 623

which they bring into the curriculum. Such mind-sets typically reflect their views and meaning or purpose of education, or justification for their teaching styles. The conviction of teachers and their approach to teaching do have an influence on the learning process of the students they teach, either directly or indirectly¹⁴. Such effects often generate more impact on the students. The longer they are exposed to the same teachers, the more they are affected by such methods.

In this study, the main concern is how to train and equip the seminarian to graduate with the knowledge, skills and competence he needs in facing the challenges of pastoral work in terms of collaboration and inculturation. Such a vision needs a holistic approach for personality formation. I believe such an approach can only be observed on the results deliberated upon, after an evaluative study to establish the effectiveness of the current program to ascertain the level to which it has to achieve this objective in relation to the teaching pedagogy.

In addition to administrative shortfalls, the pedagogue front has not been so much spared by rudimentary persistence of the colonial style of teaching that was inherited by the early formators (authoritarian style). The stringent regimental approach to the formation process still persists among some professors. Several studies, to some extent, support this observation in that the teacher will always teach his students the way he was taught. Darling-Hammond¹⁵ also stresses that teachers teach from what they understand and believe about learning; from what they know how to do and what their environment will allow. What any individual believes and understands about a concept is purely dependent on his/her knowledge base of the concept. A conceptual scheme has been learned and adopted through past experience with such a concept. We therefore noticed that the belief of the concept of learning and possibly the mind-sets that a teacher brings into the classroom is influenced by his past experience and also his belief about learning and about the role of education. A number of curriculum specialists have attempted to classify and to describe the common elements among the different mind-sets¹⁶.

14 . Cf. P.D. Kauchak, Eggen p., *Learning and Teaching*, 1993, page n.a.

15 Cf. D. Hammondet, (ed.), *Authentic Assessment in Action Studies and Students at Work*, New York, Teachers College Press, 1995.

16 Cf. Eisner and Vallance, *"Conflicting Conceptions of Curriculum"*, Berkely Press, 1974; Cf. Fenstermacher & J. Soltis, *Approaches to Teaching*, New York: Teachers College Press, 1986, pp. 8-26.

Perhaps the most well known system of categorization is the one proposed by Eisner and Vallance¹⁷ in view of teacher mind-set: (1) curriculum as academic rationalism, (2) self-actualization, and (3) the development of cognitive processes.

3.1 Academic rationalism

According to Purdom, teachers who adhere to the academic rational conception, labelled by others as classical, traditional or academic subject¹⁸, are concerned with the development of the mind. Such people believe that subject matter from the established academic discipline is the critical substance for intellectual growth. They have a strong focus on the teaching of “proven” or “classical” subjects such as logic, philosophy, mathematics, or Latin. The role of the teacher is to simplify and make his lecture interesting. As a professional, he implements this by organizing and transmitting whatever information he has through his style of teaching with the assumption that the knowledge he impacts is being understood by the students. Evaluation tends to take the form of written examinations and term papers that cause the student to recall or to use the newly acquired knowledge.

Ormond holds that a teacher with this type of curriculum mind-set has the view that students should study such vigorous subjects to strengthen the mind¹⁹, which relates freely with others. By undergoing such mental “exercise”, students become capable of learning many other unrelated things more easily. The emphasis placed on learning facts (isolated pieces of information that are believed to make the building block of more advanced forms of knowledge) has varied over the recent years. In the olden days, before textbooks were readily available, note memorisation of facts was the primary form of learning²⁰. It is unfortunate that many teachers still resist change or improvement in their methodologies thereby maintaining their out-modelled teaching styles over the generations.

¹⁷ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 26.

¹⁸ M. Purdom, *Viewing Modern Instructional Technology through Conceptions of Curriculum*. *Educational Technology Review*, 1996, autumn, no. 6.

¹⁹ Cf. Ormond, *Op. cit.*, p. 623.

²⁰ P.D.Kauchak., *Learning g And Teaching*, in Forsyth, V.C. Lonigan, & N. DePalma (eds.), M.A.: Allyn & Bacon, 1997, p. 185.

3.2 Self-Actualization

Many educators believe that the most important outcome of schooling is the maximum development of each individual's potentialities. For Purdom, instead of promoting a common body of subject matter or intellectual skills to master, they may favour education that seeks to develop the special abilities, skills and interests of each individual to the maximum²¹. We can therefore assume that, this mind-set approach aims at a quality of education that would produce individuals who continually seek to identify and to further develop their unique abilities and interests throughout their lifetimes. Purdom, a psychologist, further refers to the mind-set by underlying this position as the self-actualization, humanistic "whole child", or personalized conception of curriculum²². The role of the teacher accordingly is to help each learner to set up personal goals and pursue them. This involves learning how to acquire knowledge, and how to promote the development of planning, independent thinking, choice making and evaluation skills. In an African system of operation that is communal oriented, this style of learning becomes questionable.

Although, at some points, Africans support 'open-ended' learning situations where individual learners can manipulate and control their own purposes. However, they see pre-determined behavioural objectives and linear programs as violations of their belief and value systems, since they believe more on communal endeavours. D. Bukatko agrees with this approach to learning as being effective in instilling competence in co-operative teamwork, inter-activity among the learners in both work and socially related matters; developing a broad network of relationships, which involves a learner with others²³. He refers to this approach as "open classroom" and defines it as non-traditional educational approach that lays emphasis on peer interaction, free-flowing movement of students around different activity centres in the classroom, and structured opportunities for students to "discover" knowledge. Consequently, a teacher is seen to play the role of a collaborator, a joint partner in the discovery learning process. Goals that foster an individual creativity, inquisitiveness and socialization are valued apart from that of his academic achievement. People's accomplishments are rarely compared with those of others; instead, achievement is measured by the degree of progress the individual person shows. This approach further

²¹ Cf. M. Purdom, "Viewing Modern Instructional Technology through conceptions of Curriculum. *Educational Technology Review*", autumn, no. 6.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Cf. D. Bukatko, *Child Development, A Thematic Approach*, New York-Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1995 p. 528.

concur with Dewey's philosophy²⁴ and belief that education should capitalise on the students' natural interest and curiosity, and it should integrate them into the larger society.

But the danger here is that in self-actualization, the teacher's style is visualised more as that of a *laissez faire* process. This means that the teacher does not impart his authority over students' choice of activity, but rather gives them the freedom to pursue their interest in learning, independent thinking and choice making. The dangers here are that students often do not make the right decisions about their learning process. Some students can end up not learning useful knowledge and competent skills that would help them fit into society and become competent survivors in such society. This is one of the problems in the present ecclesiastical formation in Igboland. As it were, it will not help a lot in the proposed new ecclesia where the effort should be communal instead of individualistic.

From the perspective of some educators, the self-actualization mind-set described above is too narrow and selfish oriented. Some educators believe that the ultimate purpose of education is to promote the welfare of the group²⁵. This is to say that group needs and interests are of higher priority for schooling than those of individuals. This mind-set's (as a group) views of societal needs as paramount, and therefore, the formation should be geared towards the social needs through education of the individuals within the relevant context of communalism. To moderate such a mind-set, we might love to consider it further under its two distinct views of the curriculum, namely: *adaptive and reformative*.

3.2.1 Adaptive view

Within this adoptive view, it is stipulated that the curriculum should be an instrument to help the individual learner 'adapt' and fit into his society. By learning certain skills and attitudes, students will be able to cope and to survive in the adult world as they find it and as they relate collaboratively with one another. Here again, we see that the role of the teacher becomes very important if the student is to achieve the common goal of adapting to fit into and function competently in his society, following the curriculum. The teacher's role therefore, is to help students learn those things that prepare them for the future, viewed as education for communal, social and religious perspectives. Indeed, in this view, the teacher is challenged to use authentic examples and activities to

²⁴ Cf. D. Bukatko, *Ibid.*, p. 606.

²⁵ Cf. M. Purdom, *Op. cit.*, p. 6.

facilitate the learning of the individual towards societal goals and particularly, to instil the spirit of mutual and cordial relationship among the students, the staff and the authorities.

Indeed, looking at the issue, the principle of the adaptive view: “knowledge and thinking skills are situated within the context in which they develop”²⁶. We see that the principle provides additional justification for using authentic activities mastered in the classroom in one’s environment. In other words, if we want our students to use the things they learn at schools in real-world situations later on, we should teach classroom subject matter within the contextual situations. This is to say that, if we want our future priests to meet the challenges of pastoral work within the society, we should use as many examples as possible within the context of such a society. This involves allowing them the flexibility to deliberate on problem solving activities through individual and communal participation and strategies in school assignments and projects that reflect authentic societal problems. Such authentic activities eventually facilitate transfer of problem-solving skills and competence when they eventually graduate as priests.

To achieve such flexibility of learning where the learners have to brainstorm themselves on issues and problems of society, the teaching style most appropriate for this type of mind-set is one that has the tendency towards “democratic teaching approach”. In the democratic teaching style, the teacher plays the role of a coordinator, not necessarily taking the centre stage as the ultimate terminus of authority in the learning environment, but rather liberates the minds of the students to further research work, thereby making every one a potential resource for the other. Different individuals are likely to serve as resources on different occasions, depending on the topics and tasks at hand²⁷. A democratic teacher often encourages class discussion, co-operative learning, and reciprocal teaching. Through this process, he succeeds in creating a sense of ‘community of learners’ in a classroom who work as a team in collaboration. What it means is that the teacher and students have shared goals, respect and support one another’s efforts; and they believe that everyone makes an important contribution to classroom learning through wide reading and research ventures: the essence of collaboration that is primary here. Such is the environment where authentic activities and skills can thrive best as students are challenged to think and to work together, thereby modelling effective learning and problem solving strategies.

²⁶ J.C. Ormond, *Op. cit.*, p. 623.

²⁷ Cf. Anes, 1984 in J.C. Ormond, *Ibid.*, p. 623.

3.2.2 Reformist view

The reformist view is a complement of the interiorized adaptive view. It sees the role of the curriculum as an instrument to help students change the world into a better society. However, this mind-set takes up a more idealistic and critical approach of little relevance to the realities of the society. For Purdom, it looks beyond the practical realities of society to an utopic, abstract and totally democratic world²⁸. He labels this conception as '*social reconstructionists*', '*reformists*', or '*critical theorists*'²⁹. Educators with these mind-sets want to teach students to be aware of societal problems and take action in order to make a more democratic and just society.

In this view, the role of the teacher is to identify social and pastoral problems and to facilitate inquiry into those problems by a democratic community of learners. Since these reformists want to make a critique of the society, so as to discover inequities, and to eliminate injustices, they would love to see students search for new values in society and propose changes that would make for a more democratic world. This should be seen as an idealistic task whose practicability in solving societal problems remains more abstract and theoretical, with little practical relevance. Indeed, to impart their critical theories, such teachers would adapt authoritative approach to teaching with some elements of flexibility to accommodate their learner's views through class discussions to deliberate on their views. However, due to the nature of this approach, the teaching style would lean more towards teacher mind-set control of the learning process rather than student-centredness.

3.3 Development of cognitive processes

Many educators (like Ormond and his colleagues) who hold the view of development of the cognitive process of education believe that the primary aim of self-actualization nature of education is to develop the ability to think³⁰ constructively with a view to serving the society. Intellectual development is also a prime consideration of "academic rationalistic conception". Some educators think that there are generalizable, domain-free, cognitive processes that can be developed regardless of the subject matter studied. They value intellectual process over content and believe that practically any

²⁸ Cf. M. Purdom, *Op. cit.*, p. 6.

²⁹ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

³⁰ Cf. in J.C. Ormond, *Op. cit.*, p. 623.

content can be used to facilitate problem solving, critical thinking and higher order thinking processes. Furthermore, the cognitive processes that are developed are thought to be applicable to any field through meaningful learning and elaboration, a factor that facilitates learning from one context to another.

Examples of such skills are: recognizing underlying assumptions, distinguishing between relevant and irrelevant data, formulating hypotheses, and distinguishing fact from opinion. The role of the teacher in this conception is to provide activities and materials that require students to solve interesting problems. Like we have seen in the adaptive social relevance that in democratic teaching style, the teacher presents problems, dilemmas, and puzzles, models problem-solving skills and plays devil's advocate by questioning, debating and challenging student responses. The students' responses take the form of collaborative problem-solving, class discussions and co-operative learning.

Summarizing the above, we see that for a success to be recorded, there is always the need to have a curriculum mind-set which is best accounted for by the fact that the teachers who practice it tend not only to be always "authoritative" but at times "democratic" oriented. They are teachers who set reasonable and understanding limits on a student's behaviour by using the technique of induction and who display a high degree of nurturing and concern. They communicate their expectations clearly and provide explanations to help their students understand the reasons for their requests; they also listen to what their students have to say and encourage collaborative and fruitful dialogue with them. Such a prevailing atmosphere tends to be distinctly supportive and warm in the interactions between the students and their lecturers.

Baumrinal found a cluster of behavioural characteristics in a learner being exposed to different teaching styles³¹. Students operating on such a cordial mind-set tend to be friendly with peers, co-operative with adults and their lecturers, independent, energetic, and achievement-oriented in a fulfilling way. They also display a high degree of self-control and discipline. He refers to this set of characteristics as instrumental competence. In marked contrast, he discovers that students of authoritarian teachers (academic rationalists) do not exhibit the same social responsibility and independence associated with instrumental competence as the above. Instead they appear unhappily engaged, and tend to be aggressive and at times, dependent and lawless. Thus, through the self-

³¹ Cf. Baumrinal, 1991 in D. Bukatko, *Op. cit.*, p. 528.

actualization mind-set, the individuals' discovery approach to learning allows them to construct their own understanding of knowledge. The difficulty is the ability to harmonize their thought system with those of others communally. They end up getting involved in an unhealthy rivalry among their peers. This involves gaining a great deal of control over their learning process, which embodies the belief that school should exist to serve the needs of the individual instead of the communal need of the society.

4. The learning process

Having seen the essentials of a teaching method that helps to produce a better result on the studying nature of the students, in this section that has to do with the learning process, we will attempt to discuss such concepts as situated learning versus facilitation of knowledge and skill transfer that can bring about relevance of education for real life situation, the required competence among seminary graduates. Although, people talk of an ideal situation of the learners' concept: learning that focuses on understanding and ability in dealing with the world situation from the teacher's point of view. It is important to remark that learners have their own share of the problem of useful concept of learning. The students, often, have considerable difficulty applying the concepts and ideas they learn in school to other aspects of their lives. In such a situation, the problem is no longer the teacher but the student. It is one thing to learn and acquire knowledge and another thing to apply the knowledge into practical usage. How can we help students take the information they learn in one situation and apply it to another? In other words, how can we facilitate positive transfer of knowledge and skills among our learners? These are the basic questions for which we attempt to find solutions through discussion on situated cognitive and knowledge transfer theories. However, in the present situation, the issue challenges both parties: the teacher and the student as well.

Much of the current research on learning and teaching in the context of formal education has led its origin in the plethora of studies pointing to some depressing facts. For instance, many students are highly adept at very complex skills in science, humanities, and mathematics, they can also reproduce large amounts of factual information on demand, and they have appropriated enormous quantities of detailed knowledge, and pass examinations successfully. But many are unable to show that they understand what they have learned contextually³². Interestingly, these problems were foreshadowed by

³² Cf. Ramsden, 1988, p. 14 in D. Bukatko, *Op. cit.*, p. 528.

definition of inert knowledge which Hedberg sees as knowledge that can usually be recalled when people are explicitly asked to do so but not used spontaneously in problem solving even though it is relevant³³. Such are the problems we foresee with the seminary education in Igboland of Nigeria where acquisition of inert knowledge is the order of the day and where her graduates find it difficult to transfer such knowledge and apply it in their pastoral duties.

We therefore examine the tenets of situated learning, which will set a background for the discussion about the defining attributes of pastoral formation as a process. The definition will focus upon the pedagogical aspects of the formation process and its importance in achieving a learning environment, which challenges and supports effective learning. Another aspect to be considered here will be the facilitating transference of an acquired knowledge by the pastoral agents in their fields of work.

4.1 Situated learning: a basis for context

Situated cognition theory states that knowledge and thinking skills are situated within the context in which they develop³⁴. Other theorists like Anderson, Butterworth, Gelman, Mercer, Bryant, Singley, and many others, further emphasize that such knowledge and thinking skills are unlikely to be used outside these contexts³⁵. Moreover, that action is situationally grounded is surely the central claim of situated cognition. It means that the potentialities for action cannot be fully described independently of the specific situation. Surpassingly, there is currently a great deal of interest in ideas about situated learning which have drawn on earlier work on the social character of learning from Marx and Vygotsky. This basic idea that the activity in which knowledge is developed and deployed is not separable from learning and cognition, suggests that it is an integral part of what is learned.

It therefore implies that the learner's understanding is developed through continuous participation in the ordinary practices of the culture (authentic activation within the community of practitioners), enabling learners to build an increasingly rich implicit understanding of the world in which they use tools. Such authentic activities (pastoral

³³ Cf. Hedberg and Harper, 1995 in D. Bukatko, *Op. cit.*, p. 528

³⁴ Cf. J.C. Armond, *Op. cit.*, 623.

³⁵ Cf. D. Bukatko, *Op. cit.*, 528.

challenges) are framed by the celestial culture. Their meaning and purpose are socially constructed through negotiations among past and present members of the catholic formators. Wengner³⁶ proposed a view of learning as situated activity, which has the defining characteristic of legitimate peripheral participation. These educational theorists describe the relationship between the learner, expert, activities and communities of knowledge and practice, as the process by which the learner becomes part of a community of practice. Legitimate peripheral participation is not a teaching technique or strategy, but a way of describing the engagement of a novice (the learner) in the social practice, which includes the authentic activities of an expert-formator in a community of practice. The novice gradually moves from periphery participation in the community of practice to its centre.

Legitimate peripheral participation is a way of understanding learning as something that takes place regardless of the context of learning. In the context of formal education, “learning how to teach appropriately in the school may be a major problem for some school teachers. An idea that has been borne in mind through various studies reveals student’s perceptions of assessment requirements as a major motivation for what and how they learn. Learners, as participants in the community of practice of formal education, are adept in learning strategies that result in higher grades. In contrast, the motivation for legitimate peripheral participants is not a grade awarded for successful performance in assessment, but is strongly tied to their movement towards the centre of the community of practice. It helps the participants to become full practitioners by transferring such learned skills to the realities of the world in which they are going to practice and to be able to face such pastoral challenges with competence.

The concept of legitimate peripheral participation and movement towards the centre as a practitioner is suggestive of a process of decontextualisation of knowledge and skills towards a contextual independence situation. Anderson maintains the ideal that, for tightly learning to be bound to context, it depends on the kind of knowledge being acquired³⁷. Sometimes knowledge is necessarily bound to a specific context by the nature of instruction, and that, if the learner elaborates the knowledge with the material from the specific context, it becomes easier to retrieve the knowledge in that same context, but perhaps more difficult in other contexts. One general result is that knowledge is more contextually bound when it is just taught in a single context.

³⁶ Cf. Wengner, 1991 in D. Bukatko, *Op. cit.*, 528.

³⁷ Anderson, 1996 in D. Bukatko, *Ibid.*, p. 528.

The principle of situated cognition therefore provides additional justification for using authentic activities in the classroom. The aim here is to authenticate the content within the variety of contexts of the real-world situation and within the expected real time of application to enhance transfer of such skills. If we want our students to use the things they learn at school in real-world situations later on, we should teach classroom subject matters within the context of such cultural situations. Furthermore, we may occasionally be able to have students practice their knowledge and skills in so many different contexts that the things they learn are no longer confined to certain context: in other words, those things become context-free³⁸. How can we facilitate such transfer of knowledge and skills to the real-world situation within the context of situated cognitive theory as discussed above?

4.2 Facilitating transfer

Transfer of learning is a concept, which asserts that learning something in one situation affects how a learner responds or performs it in another situation³⁹. Accordingly, positive transfer takes place when a person learns something in a different environment and is mentally equipped enough to apply his knowledge in another situation. It is a negative transfer when the material learned hinders that person's ability to perform at a later time and in another environment. Consequently, from human information processing theories, students are more likely to apply something they have learned if, within the course of instruction, they are given many examples and have numerous opportunities to practice them in different cultural situations⁴⁰. By using knowledge in many contexts, students store that knowledge in association with all those contexts and are more likely to retrieve the information on a future occasion. If the above principle is accepted, we have to say that a situation where professors limit the scope of student's research to their simple handouts, would be detrimental to the acquisition of wide knowledge. As it were, such can limit the scope of wide transferred or applied knowledge. In this case, all subjects taught at the seminary should employ authentic activities related to pastoral challenges. For instance, when teaching a topic like theology, the teacher should relate these to the cultural values of society that have the effect of enhancing and maintaining a satisfactory survival mechanism of basic needs.

³⁸ Cf. J.C. Ormond, *Educational Psychology*, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1989, p. 623.

³⁹ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 323.

⁴⁰ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 323.

Ormond reveals a number of factors affecting transfer of knowledge. Those that are relevant to this study include: the extent to which learning is meaningful (rather than not being learned), variety of examples and opportunities for practice. It entails the degree of similarities between low situations and extent to which information is seen as *context-free*, rather than *context-bound*. We have already emphasized the importance of variety of examples and opportunity for practice; the extent to which information is seen as context-free, rather than context-bound.

The remaining three are briefly discussed below. The extent, to which learning is meaningful, from a constructivist point of view, entails that people take many separate pieces of information and use them to create an understanding or interpretation of the world around them⁴¹. Such pieces of information are derived from the learner's past experiences with the information (scheme) and his ability to elaborate (go beyond the given piece of information) with the purpose to make inference in an organized way. Information learned in a meaningful fashion is more likely to be transferred or applied to a new situation, since it involves connecting information with the things that one already knows. The more associations students make between new information and the various other things in their long-term memories, the more likely it is that they will find (retrieve) it at a time when it will be useful. This is the extent to which principles rather than facts are learned.

People can transfer general (and perhaps somewhat abstract) principles more easily than specific or concrete facts⁴². Specific facts have an important place in the classroom like the Nigeria-Biafra civil war that started in 1967. Yet facts themselves have limited utility in new situations. The more we emphasize general principles instead of specific facts, the more we facilitate students' ability to transfer the things they are taught. For example, that the cultures of various nations are partly a function of their location and climate, or that a country's citizens sometimes revolt when their government officials act unjustly, is a function of general principles.

However, Ormond points out the fact that transfer is more likely to occur when a new situation appears to be similar to a previous situation⁴³. Here again we see the value of authentic activities in the curriculum. Of many examples and opportunities for practice

⁴¹ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 323.

⁴² Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 623.

⁴³ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 623.

that students get, some should be very similar to the situation that they are likely to encounter in their future studies or in the outside world. The more that school tasks and assignments resemble students' later life experiences, the more likely it is that our seminarians will put their school learning to use. After these theoretical considerations, we need to look at the application in the contextual environment that will enable context-free learning to take effect among our seminary graduates. This involves the ability to enhance transfer of their knowledge to the challenges of the real-world situation when they are finally ordained priests.

5. Situational application

From the brief description of the four types of teacher mind-sets as discussed above, we have identified four teaching styles often used with such mind-sets to achieve their goals for varied views of curriculum in school, such teaching styles as authoritarian (autocratic), authoritative (assertive), democratic and *laissez-faire*. The teaching styles have their impact on the product (students' formation). Tailoring these theories to our main challenging factors of poor methodology, poor collaboration and inculturation, we discover that a relevant pedagogy is necessary for the achievement of the set up goal. Comparative pedagogy often boils down to classroom organization by the professor and this depends on individuals and institutions. For instance, if the school or an individual method of collaboration is student-centred, it is interpreted to be more of "*democratic and laissez faire*" oriented. But, if it is professor-centred, it is *authoritarian/authoritative* in nature. However, if it is a process-goal set-centred, it employs the synthesis of the other two, creates flexibility in the use of methods as it manipulates *democratic/animative, laissez faire*, but with attention on *authoritarian/authoritative* principle. In this case, the *curriculum centredness* is beyond the teacher and the student, but not without their consideration in the system as they will be the instruments for the realization of the set goal. In other words, the flexibility lies more on the *teacher-student* relationship, who functions as active participants, active collaborators, and executors of the project rather than domineering entities.

Under normal circumstances, "democratic/animation" method is preferred to authoritarian principles, which consciously or unconsciously have the tune of *superior-inferior relationship*. However, due to some ethnic basis and the need for variety in

teaching, both of them can be applied at some period or the other. Nevertheless, there is the need to consider the challenging factors that affect the students who are part and parcel of their cultures and this is where *laissez-faire* (moderately) becomes helpful.

The above discussion is approached from the elaborated and general viewpoints. The theories are presented for the seminary authorities in Africa in general and Nigeria-Igbo Church in particular to see the implication of authoritarian method of teaching or formation as it exists in most of our seminaries. It is also helpful for us to see the good result of using the authoritative principles for effective administration. As applied here, we shall consider this under two phases: (1) as applied to the formation of the agents of evangelization, and (2) as applied to educational utility.

5.1 As applied to the formation of the clergy and laity

The application of qualitative and collaborative nature of education as we are proposing here, applies to the clergy and well as the laity animators and missionaries who can profit from the existing seminary institutions and be trained together along with the seminarians as their programme of studies will be drawn to suit their type of formation. However, in reference to *before and after Vatican II*, a lot has been written about the priestly formation, which in our context of industrialization, secularization, and culturalization, could act as guide when the above principles are to be applied.

5.1.1 Formation of seminarians and priests following the guides of the authorities of the Church

Pius XII, in his Exhortation to the clergy, *Menti Nostrae*, signalled the need to chart a new path for Seminaries. He called the seminary authorities 'to read the signs of the times'. "While his document was for its spiritual message, the call for a complete updating was not heard"⁴⁴. Consequently, the formation of priesthood suffered untold crises that attracted the attention of the Vatican II that calls for ecclesiastical renewal: the change of the image of priesthood and priestly formation, under "unity and mission".

⁴⁴ Cf. Pius XII, *Adhortatio Apostolica "Menti Nostrae"*, part 3, AAS, October 2, 1951 in Michael Mulvey (ed.) *Priests of the Future Formation and Communion*, USA: New City Press, 1991, p. 19.

Vatican II insists on communitarian as against individualistic formation of future priests and this agrees with the group or democratic type of teaching and learning as observed above. The essence of the decree on priestly formation, *Optatam Totius*, is mission and dialogue. "Mystery, unity, and mission (seeing Christ and the world in the context of ecclesial and presbyteral unity) are the central themes for the Council"⁴⁵.

The essence for formation of our seminarians and educational updating (*formatio permanens*) of our priests, has been clearly stressed by the Synod of 1990 *Lineamenta*, and the African Synod emphasis here is on *dialogue*, *permanent* and *collaborative* education and entails a good spirituality of life, justice and peace, etc. The "rich contents of Pope John Paul II *Pastores Dabo Vobis* need to be carefully studied and its recommendations applied to our programme of priestly training"⁴⁶ that is communitarian and closely attached to the culture of the seminarians.

In view of our new model of ecclesiology, it is imperative that the pedagogy has a clear objective: production of cultural evangelizers. Moreover, it has to be matched with high expectations, elicit motivation, and encourage learners to take control of their guided curriculum activities through vast researched cultural readings as democratic theory implies. However, it must be technically relevant and appropriate to its purpose and theoretically sophisticated to embrace many disciplines. The evolution of the system as an organization reveals ingenuity, capacity and willingness to reinvent its structure for its purposeful end. The style of teaching must not be domineering or hyper authoritarian but democratic oriented with a focus on teaching and learning, the objective and a recognition of the intrinsic worth of each individual student for a common purpose.

It is important to bear in mind that seminary training has an objective aim, which is realizable through the spirit of collaboration as it is lacking to some extent among the professors and the students in our context. By collaboration as we saw earlier, we mean individuals working together toward a common goal in relationships that are mutually empowering, respectful, responsive and free. This involves the spirit of free expression and a mutual communication system in the classroom and within the seminary environment. By communication, we mean the possibility of providing multiple avenues for students to provide input into and receive information on issues and decisions that affect them through their knowledge of transfer application. Some of their research

⁴⁵ Mulvey, *Ibid.*, p. 20.

⁴⁶ J. Onaiyekan, *Op. cit.*, p. 102.

programmes have to be carried out as a group to reflect a democratic representation as against autocracy that prevails.

By democratic empowerment, I mean freedom of individual contribution, self-commitment through representative principles that lead to a totality of a success. It requires involvement, sharing of ideas, rights and responsibilities together. Democratic governance is more of a participatory communal activity, which includes diverse voices and experiences through effective endeavour. This participatory spirit squares well with the Igbo system of education in the traditional set up that involves learning by doing, imitating the leader and sharing of views collaboratively. In this process, people share their talented gifts together and the leader becomes part of the system in the spirit of communalism through effective collaboration. By effectiveness, I mean efficiency and responsibility in governance, collaboration and dedication to duty that involve the students as well as the teachers in mutual understanding. This system of pedagogy involves effective supervisory leadership that is accountable and trustworthy.

Other required qualities are the spirit of flexibility, life-inclusiveness and acknowledgement of differences in character. By the spirit of flexibility, I mean the capacity to anticipate and adapt to periodical changes in curriculum and the circumstances surrounding the studies. By inclusive, I mean the ability to provide the necessary opportunities for all to engage meaningfully in the challenging seminary life environment. The training has to be all-inclusive in its orientation. This involves the recognition of values, talents and differences in individuals and cultures, which have to influence the nature of the learning and acquiring skill. Learning-centredness here involves the continuous improvement through proactive practice and reflection of what is taught and learnt. Learning-centred governance recognizes the primacy of student and the quality of the end product in relation to the cultural environment they will minister to later.

Our effort here will be to harmonise the above variables (different educational theories of teaching and learning in relation to the teachings of the Church's authorities; the teacher and the student relationship) within a given system of curriculum. Education for a proper evangelization is not only meant for the seminarians but also for the lay people as they are co-apostolates of the clergy in the Lord's vineyard.

5.1.2 Formation of laity

Lay people should be allowed to follow in the philosophical and theological studies just like the seminarians where such interest is shown, but not without their specific programme of studies. But before attending theology pure, they should have a one-year basic programme and this will be followed with a four-year complete canonical advanced program, to be carried out later within the deeper theological studies like that of the clergy. In this four-year programme, the first three years will be concentrated on getting a religious degree, while the fourth year will be consecrated for obtaining masters in canonical theology. The basic program gives participants a global vision of faith as expressed in its catechetical perspectives. It will have to involve four main areas.

The first aspect of this guide includes the introduction to the Old Testament history which encompasses God's creation, covenantal bond, understanding the commandments within the perspective of our relationship with a loving and liberating God, and our responsibility to respond to God's salvific plan. The second course will be the New Testament, as a fulfilment of the Old: basic theology of Christology, immanent and transcendent, aim at knowing Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels and the birth of Catholic Church. Then the third course, ecclesiology, its historical evolution and what mission means today. The perspective of this course will be the stages of Catechism, discussions on the Sacraments, early Christian community ecclesia applying the Pauline letters and Acts to discover the basic historical facts about the growth of the Church. The fourth stage will be Inculturation, which will involve the liturgy, the story telling process of teaching catechism, applying African idioms, symbols, in conformity with the curriculum that will help to address contextual societal issues.

Participating candidates who want ordinary certificate may end up attending a two-year programme to enable them to acquire any of these ministries: as catechists, as Eucharistic ministers, as ministers of the Word, (Scriptural sharing), as organizers of Charity ministry (visiting the sick, the poor, the marginalized, the widow and widower, and the elderly people), as ministers of the youths, (like youths' Chaplains), as missionary apostolate, (like prayer warriors) and ministers of different pious organizations (like "Saint Vincent de Paul", "Sacred Heart Society", etc).

At times, the problems of learning may be the nature of teaching or lack of ability. The consequent of this could be the students lacking of the essential learning strategies like the processes of acquiring information or how to process information and personal

management strategies as discussed above. Effort should be made to create incentive opportunities for the students so that they will be encouraged to study under a fertilized atmosphere of good collaboration and caring. The process has to be well organized in a diocesan and parish level as we have in some dioceses, Institutions of Evangelization and Theological Institutes for Religious Studies, etc. However, what is fundamental is that the process of imparting knowledge should correspond with the zeal to acquire it, if success is to be recorded in our new model ecclesia

5.2 Educational utility

It will be incomplete if we fail to consider, generally, the usefulness of education for the development of a community. In our early discussion on collaboration, we presented the view that evangelization also entails the possible ways of alleviating the spiritual, social and economic problems of the people. As we have treated the necessary education for the agents of evangelization, there is also the need here to briefly touch on how this should be applied in the life situation.

The application of education in the economic, political and social growth of a nation helps to strengthen the argument for a standard and qualitative formation of our future priests and other evangelizers. The early Catholic missionaries were able to succeed in winning the hearts of the people not because they preached wonderfully in comparison with other denominations, but mainly because they articulated the social and economic needs of the people and responded favourably towards them. They were importing food items, medicinal drugs, etc., from their countries; coupled with the fact that they established tertiary workshops for economic yielding purposes, just to help the people on their socio-economic poverty.

Moreover, theoretical approach to the training in the seminaries cannot help us much, considering the fact that not all those who enter seminary, end up becoming priests; some do fall on the way side in the process of training. What will become of this group if their orientations are limited to religious doctrines that are “gradually *getting disgusted* in the modern concept”, outside the walls of the seminary and mission? Religion is rapidly loosing its credence in the present world of technology, economic proficiency and personal identification or recognition. Nevertheless, its role as the conscience of a society cannot be over-emphasized. Nonetheless, there is a need to educate people on how to manage their lives in order to be useful to themselves and to the society.

Such a situation actually needs the effort of everybody in the form of collaboration for a communal success. In this case, Christians need to be more united to fight against poverty, and the provision of human needs in the best way they can, especially by helping people to be engaged in finding solutions to their problems. Therefore, it is my conviction that a lot is expected of our pastors in relation to socio-anthropological cum economic situation of Igbo people of Nigeria today. It is not enough to tell a hungry woman who approaches a priest for help, “*go in peace, God bless you*”. She will go home disappointed because her need has not been met. We should try to balance our preaching with material and social help and this calls for urgent establishment of small industries, more hospitals, technical schools, etc as part of seminary training, if we are to succeed in this present world. It is impossible to arrive at this without socio-economic planning projects in the diocese and parishes.

6. Evaluative conclusion

6.1 The process of teaching and learning in our seminaries

What is fundamental here is the manner of acquiring knowledge and growing in it, which entails dedication on both aspects: the professor and the students. In the concept of teaching, effort has to be made to present very well what is to be done and how it is to be done. Motivation is necessary at this point. This is where the teacher proves his competence to handle human beings of different formation backgrounds. On the side of the learners, effort should also be made to capture and internalize the new ideas that come in, following the prescribed method. Interaction between the teacher and the students is necessary in terms of supervision. It is our conviction that this method will be helpful in our major Seminaries. There must be that mutual understanding and cordial relationship between the students and the teachers. This is to be realized in the gestative method application by the professor who will always see the seminarians as junior brothers and not as inferiors to them.

What it means is that the teacher should try to create a conducive atmosphere of learning for the students. Effort should be made to create an “*enigma*”, a problematic situation as a challenge to the students to instigate them to work towards cultural solutions. However, this ought to be within the scope of the subject and the competence of the students in question and has to be relevant to their environment. All these depend on the teaching skill and ability to relate well with the students in collaborative mood.

6.2 Didactic method - on the side of the professor

This demonstrates the ability of the teacher to introduce and handle his work well before the students. He should help them not only to learn but also to understand the various ways and means of learning and acquiring knowledge. Moreover, he has to create in the students the awareness of their end expectations – a new mission within a new ecclesia, the spirit of collaborative work. He does this by defining well the general and the specific objectives of the course, describing the activities, and showing them how to reach the end successfully, as he maintains a healthy relationship with others. This entails choosing a method, a technique and a means of using the materials for the objectivity of the work. In the objective pedagogy, there is a presupposition of some knowledge (*a priori*) on the part of the students, the teacher plays the role of a midwife, forming and reforming the objective pattern as the situation prevails, thereby, encouraging the students to research, especially on cultural problems of the people, while developing the attitude of working as a team. This also presupposes that the professor himself will have to be current by being resourceful at the same time creating a cordial and functional relationship with all the students. These will not be achieved without the spirit of collaboration and love that should exist between the staff and the seminarians in one part and among seminarians themselves.

6.3 The pedagogic method as discussed

This pedagogic method, as discussed in this chapter, involves the formator, the learner(s), and the material (*source*), under any of the systems: professor, students and material (*Savoir*), - (which could be called a triangular pedagogy). The triangular pedagogy functions together for effective results as indicated in the conceptual framework above. However, each side represents an essential axis in the pedagogic principles for successful output. In this situation, the teacher and the student are involved in the collaborative research finding democratically: this involves a teamwork to enable them to reach the goal. The goal involves good performance of the teacher, good standard being achieved through the acquisition of knowledge by the student. He is not only to perform well at the examination, but should have the ability to use what he has learned to solve societal challenging problems that will confront him in his mission later anywhere – (Cf. Transfer of Knowledge above).

This system rules out the *magisterial/authoritarian or teacher-centred method* of imparting knowledge whereby the teacher alone has access to the source and makes notes for the students and limits his exams to the materials he made available to them. Under such a limited nature of education, the communication is only between the teacher and the students. The teacher becomes the only source of learning - (this is an old method of teaching) and is over-taking, except in situations where the material(s) is only accessible to the teacher, like when he travels overseas and chanced to discover any relevant material. Or, a situation where, because of the nature of some textbooks, the students find it difficult to understand them, the teacher can simplify or summarize such books for their use. Such situations are normal; nobody frowns at them, what we are ruling out here is the “totalization of knowledge” by the professor as if to say that he determines what the students should know or that no knowledge exists outside him.

6.4 The process of learning: on the side of the students

The principle, on the side of a student, is the ability of acquiring knowledge and growing in it through the better use of materials introduced by the teacher or beyond (his personal effort). The learner receives new ideas that nourish and elevate what he has already known before for enrichment, *approfondissement* and progress. In the process, there is rupture, which involves reorganization (destruction-reconstruction) when the former knowledge is judged inadequate in proportion to the new acquired ideas. Take for instance, a situation where collaboration is lacking, with the new system of acquiring knowledge and growing in it, the tendency will be to abandon the former in preference to the latter. The student proves his competence in collaborative teamwork through the work reproduction in the operational fashion of the assignment. Finally, he is able to meet the goal, by representing the communal interest.

The learned attitudes, knowledge and problem-solving skills and their relevance to meet societal needs, require maintenance of the spirit of collaboration. Our intention to evaluate the current formation process in Nigerian-Igbo seminaries, with a view to improving their effectiveness for more competent graduates, therefore, calls for a collaborative conceptualisation of measurable attributes or variables of such teaching styles as we saw above. But this cannot be achieved without a sound and healthy loving relationship among the students and the teachers. Generally, in the light of the above considerations and the collected data from our interviews, we have the following succinct points to present:

- Seminary formation should take into cognisance the understanding of the unique nature of persons involved and the environment in which they are living. The formation of priests and men religious for evangelization requires a programme that focuses on the candidate as a whole person (body and soul), who later will function within a given culture.

- Effort should be made to give our seminarians mature training to help them develop the sense of “self-thinking”, self-resourcefulness, and down to earth in terms of cultural values and propositions.

- Effort should be made to give our seminarians the necessary basic communication skills – and priests themselves ought to do their best to acquire such skills⁴⁷. These should reflect the modern and the traditional ways of socializing and relating to one another, including use of modern technological instruments.

- A conscious and selfless effort has to be made by the seminary authorities to take the seminarians as their brothers of the same father (God), whereby, authoritative method of formation is used instead of authoritarian type that instils fear and terror. Thus, formators must be humane with flexible and approachable characters and not as dictators.

- It is advisable to have two spiritual directors working together in a seminary institute to enable them to share the difficulties, challenges and successes of formation work together. And this calls for the spirit of collaboration between them so as to enable them to relate cordially to and maintain the same spirit with the students.

- The nature of training should be such that it reflects the mind of the Church and the needs of the community. The above calls for adequate facilities and re-adjustment of the programmes to achieve the required aims and objectives. Thus, the attention of the Bishops on the nature of lecturers to be sent to teach in the seminary becomes imperative.

- Let our formators be those whose facial dispositions are “very inviting” and not the agonizing and antagonizing types. We need such lecturers whose life-styles

⁴⁷ Cf. J. Onaiyekan, *Op. cit.*, p. 99.

correspond with their spirituality and belief and who will be prepared to experiment on the above propositions.

- We need forward looking and industrious formators who not only like the spirit of consistent research but who encourage advancement of knowledge widely: religiously, culturally, ethnologically, economically, administratively, and socially.

- There should also be organized courses in Igbo traditional religion, in all major Seminaries to make a proper theological reflection on its elements and to prepare the future clergy for evangelization.

- Seminary training needs to be vastly improved and linked with the needs and challenges of the cultural apostolate including ecumenism. Emphasis should be on quality rather than quantity⁴⁸ and this is realizable through the spirit of collaboration.

- Seminary formation should not be limited to priests alone. Effort should be made to encourage lay people into theological studies, especially in the major seminary academic environments or special evangelical studies. Moreover, constant seminars should be given to our seminarians from outside qualified specialists on how to work as a team.

- Renewal training and periodical seminars are encouraged for seminary formators and priests who are already in the field to enable them update their methods of teachings and pastoral approach.

- There is need for the pastoral priests in the field, especially the well experienced among them, to be invited occasionally to share their experiences with the formators and the seminaries. This will help to create awareness on what is happening in the field where these seminarians will work in future; also it will help the formators to review, improve and determine areas of priority and concentration.

- The Gospel needs to be culturally presented and this calls for the need of inculturation that will familiarize the Good News in the life and culture of the people. Full attention should be devoted to the teaching of inculturation in all our seminaries and not just a few; this has to be approached in the spirit of collaboration.

⁴⁸ Cf. *New Era of Evangelization - Seminar proceedings*, (sponsored by the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria), Nigeria-Ibadan: SS. Peter and Paul Seminary Press, 1984, p. 121

- Therefore, the native, valuable traditional customs and beliefs should be seen as stepping-stones to real evangelization,⁴⁹ and incarnation of the gospel message in line with the ecclesial teaching.

- In the process of inculturation, efforts should be made to discern the symbolical and good cultural values to be used for theological, liturgical or pastoral renewals. This is because in every culture there are diabolical or bad aspects that are not noble enough or appropriate to be integrated in the Christian faith expression. Thus, all such negative elements that will not constitute growth in the inculturated process of the Gospel message within the cultural life of the people, need to be eliminated.

In consonance with a central goal of the philosophy of education in the Seminaries that demands a holistic approach of learning. Rev. Doctor Peter Lwaminda⁵⁰, a sociologist, and the secretary of AMECEA in his article, *"The Church-as-family: Its implications For the Formation of the Agents of Evangelization"*, insists that the nature of formation for the future evangelizers in Africa should take into cognisance the understanding of the persons involved and the environment in which they are going to work. And this is the principle that has guided our discussion in this chapter. The formation of priests and men religious for evangelization requires a programme that focuses on the candidate as a whole person (body and soul), which according to John Paul II in the recent Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Vita Consecrata*, includes "every aspect of the personality, in behaviour and intentions"⁵¹. Therefore, "the formation programme should cover the spiritual, theological, biblical, anthropological, psychological, pedagogical and pastoral aspects, each of which should have a clear objective"⁵². The approaches applied, either theoretical or practical should correspond not only to different stages of the candidate's education process, but more especially, to culture under which the student will work after. Thus, what is learnt in theory is meant to be put into practice in ministry as reflected in our literature reviews.

The literature reviews, as presented earlier, are sure evidence of contextual situational background of our dissertation as they show clear evidence of Pre-Vatican II's

⁴⁹ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 78.

⁵⁰ P. Lwaminda, *"The Church-as-family: Its implications For the Formation of the Agents of Evangelization"*, in *AFER (African Ecclesial Review)*, with the Theme: *"Formation of the Agents of Evangelization for the Church-as-family of God"*. Aug./Oct./Dec., 1999, pp. 181-193.

⁵¹ Quoted in *AFER, Ibid.*, No. 65.

⁵² *Ibid.*

principles of administration that do not cohere with effective collaborative administration. In our new proposed ecclesiology, there is need for a change of orientation in formation that will enhance the proposed Church as family of God (there was very little link made in this chapter between this ecclesiology and the formation); and this has to do with the nature of formation in the seminaries. Thus, to achieve such a programme, there is the need for formators who are competent, knowledgeable and clear in transmitting the required knowledge through a proper pedagogy. Moreover, such formators are meant to work in the spirit of collaboration, not only among the staff, but also with the seminarians, whom they are to see as junior brothers. It is not enough for a formator to have a doctorate in a certain field, he/she must know how to impart this knowledge to the candidates as is pointed out in the *Directives pour la préparation des éducateurs de Séminaire*⁵³. Among other qualities, formators must be humane with flexible and approachable characters and not as dictators. Moreover, cordial relationship and mutual understanding between the formators and the formed is imperative, as it will be based on open dialogue and respect, something which has been lacking in many of our seminaries. Human formation is necessary as it takes care of subconscious motivation, a sense of maturity in action and in relationship with others.

Lecturers in the major seminaries ought to have a more integrated vision that encompasses among other things, moral, social, economic, political and religious views. These visions cannot be isolated. Social ideals and perspectives are reflected in teaching practices, and educational ideals will be intertwined with problems, issues, and events in the societal set up. This calls for a democratic environment, establishing an open, non-threatening classroom that allows teachers and students to share the ownership of knowledge. This also enables the teachers to relinquish the strain of artificially imposed authority that, because of the hidden curriculum and the hierarchical structure of schools, is present in many seminary classrooms and institutions. Sorensen⁵⁴ sees this idea of sharing the ownership of knowledge as the key to the possibility for student's empowerment. We are then persuaded to ask: when shall we learn to empower our seminarians who are presently seen but not heard until after their priestly ordination?

⁵³ Cf. Sylvain, *Op. cit.*, in *AFER (African Ecclesial Review)*, with the Theme: *Formation of the Agents of Evangelization for the Church-as-family of God*, Aug./Oct./Dec., 1999

⁵⁴ Cf. K. Sorenson, "Creating a Democratic Classroom: Empowering Students within and outside School walls" in Landon, *Creating Democratic Classroom - the Struggle to Integrate Theory and Practice*, New York: Amsterdam Avenue, 1996.

This process is vehemently opposed to authoritarian teaching method where students are taught to passively accept knowledge presented to them and it remains at the periphery, as it has not formed part of them. Students do not feel a sense of ownership or accomplishment when factual information is merely “fed” to them. Sorensen⁵⁵ maintains that in a classroom where students are striving for empowerment, an entirely different process of experience is taking place. Students are making decisions, reflecting and evaluating experiences, thinking critically as they are given the time and the support to do so. In such a situation, answers or responses to questions during examinations should come from the students themselves and not literally from externals like teachers and texts to be memorized and reproduced. But, rather, as acquired ideas that need to be synthesized and appropriated as part of the person’s knowledge. Moreover, any nature of formation should not be divorced of effective collaboration that encourages a healthy relationship of all within the existing system.

Finally, according to Professor Ekwunife, in all our seminaries, “it is important to generate a great intimacy with the group and serious concern for the creation of team spirit and co-operation among them and the staff”. There is need for our Catholic seminaries to emphasize the spirit of community living and values to cut across individualistic, ethnic and social boundaries. This has to be given a christological interpretation of the concept of neighbour as found in the *Parable of the Good Samaritan*, (Cf. Lk 10:2937). The seminary should be a school where the traditional African family and neighbourly spirit are nurtured and sustained. However, this sense of community cannot be fostered without a deep sense of justice⁵⁶.

⁵⁵ Cf. Orenson, K. *Creating a Democratic Classroom: Empowering Students within and outside School walls* in E. Landon E. *Ibid.*, p. 88.

⁵⁶ Cf. A.N.O. Ekwunife et al (eds.), *Renewal of Priestly Life and Ministry: The Nigerian Experience*, Nigeria-Enugu: SNAAP Press Ltd., 1995, pp. 58-81.

CHAPTER IX

ROLES OF THE AGENTS OF EVANGELIZATION IN IGBOLAND: CLERGY-LAITY COLLABORATION

In chapter eight, we tried to present the pertinent nature of education that would be relevant in the new proposed ecclesial family of God, knowing the challenges of the actual situation pastorally in Igboland of Nigeria, in particular. Our main concern in this chapter is to match it up with the suggestible practical life style of the agents of evangelization as they have to function together in the spirit of communalism bearing in mind the content of our observation and the previously treated chapters. The thesis here is that the Spirit of communal collaborative service for the effective running of the Church makes a challenging demand on the agents of evangelization (Bishops, priests, and laity). As this topic is central in our dissertation, we have chosen to approach it by first situating it within a pastoral perspective, thereby contextualizing it within the framework of “*umunna communalism*”. In the Igbo worldview, we presented the unified spirit of *umunna* community that incorporates everybody within the clan, unless those who are ostracised or banished as a result of their going contrary to the injunctions of the *omenala*, (customary law). What is central in the *umunna* community is the traditional symbol of authority called “*Ofo*”.

The head of the family keeps the “*Ofo*” which is a symbol of unity and peace in his *Obi*. What it means is that the community leader, who has the mantle of authority, has to maintain unity and peace as the living representation of his great ancestor before the living community of *umunna*. The implication is that the members, being guided by the eldest man (*onye isi opara*) as the family head who holds the *Ofo* (the symbol of authority and peace), have to observe the unifying code of conduct and work in collaboration, in harmony and peace for the wellbeing of everybody in the community. While the authority of the community of *umunna* goes along the lines of the family heads, the legislative authority and the decision making are not vested solely on any individual but on the

umunna community, represented by the family heads and presided over by the chief family head, the holder of “*Ofo*”. What is important here is the general *consensus* of the *umunna* members to whatever decisions that are made for the community. Such a collaborative system of administration is what we are proposing for the agents of evangelization with the local bishop as *onye isi ala* (the ecclesia family leader) who holds the mantle of *Ofo* by virtue of his position, functions along with other members of God’s family

As the Church sojourns in Igboland, there is need to give it an Igbo face through inculturation “instead of clinging fast to absolutism and authoritarianism”¹ that keep many in bondage and communally inactive. This will enable us to examine the roles of the agents of evangelization – the Bishops, the priests and the laity working in collaboration for the realization of God’s salvific purpose on earth. As our problem is the poor collaboration among these agents caused by the nature of ecclesiology, this chapter, in view of the examined theories and historical expositions, will dive into the deep, by synthesizing all these relevant facts that will help to substantiate our new proposed model of ecclesia. The new Church as proposed, would be dynamic, progressive, and communal oriented. It would be the type of ecclesia that will help the faithful to work in peace, harmony and in conjunction with the present day missiology through the fundamental guide of inculturation that is by its very nature, dynamic and locally oriented. As the agents of evangelization are primarily implicated in our thesis, we shall try to propose possible ways they will function within the new ecclesia of *umunna*.

In Igbo local community of God’s household, there are diversity of functions and ministries for both clergy and laity. The pertinent question to be asked here is: how would the agents of evangelization collaborate in such a way, so that the observed problems of “clericalism and institutionalism” that keep a portion of God’s people in bondage, will be ameliorated in the new proposed ecclesia? The local bishop, as “vicar of Christ” and as an elder (*Onye Isi Opara*) in the traditional set up, governs and co-ordinates the diversity of

¹ E. Onuoha, *Inculturation of Church Authority in Igboland*, in A.N.O. Ekwunife et al (eds.), *Renewal of Priestly Life and Ministry: The Nigerian Experience*, Nigeria-Enugu: Snaap Press Ltd., 1995, pp. 302-331.

charisms along with his cabinet members, the priests and the laity. In view of this, we shall present their respective functions which may help them realize this vision of communal service as they minister to the people of God. One would then love to know, first, the ministerial roles of the local bishop as a chief elder family member governing the people of God in the spirit of communalism.

1. Local bishop and ministry

In Igboland, family is the centrality of *umunna* community as a unifier. It is primary in the community of *umunna* as it is a home for the basic and earlier education of all the members. Local bishop in our communal ecclesia as family of God is the father of all (*Nna oha nine*), who represents Christ, our great Ancestor before his begotten people. A local bishop, to be effective in our new ecclesia must first of all be conscious of the challenges of the spirit of clericalism and institutionalism that somehow divides the Church today. This will enable him to look inwardly into himself and to have the courage to face them with fidelity and coherence, in order to be a witness of hope”². He has to see how the family of God entrusted to him has to interact and to communicate at all levels communally. This means that he has to develop the skill of listening, and a powerful efficiency of coordination as a “spiritual father, who indicates the part to be trodden with words and with witness”³. Thus, in considering the role of a local bishop as an agent of evangelization who should function in collaboration with other agents in view of our observed problems, we shall present his main functions under the following points: (1) as a witness of hope, (2) as a radiator of love, (3) as a coordinator of collaboration, (4) as a promoter of dialogue and collegiality, and (5) as a model of authority.

2 Cardinal G. Battista's contribution during the Synod of Bishops in Rome: September 30-October 27, 2001, with the theme: “*The Bishops as servant of the Gospel of Jesus Christ for the hope of the world*” in *The Wanderer*, October 18, 2002, p. 9.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 9.

1.1. Signs of hope

To be an effective witness of hope, the bishop must inspire collaboration, which is fundamental in our new proposed model of family ecclesia. Realizing the nature of a local bishop as *Nna* (father) of the Church and true custodian of faith after Christ, one concludes immediately that he is there to instil hope for the people, to reassure them of God's love as brothers and sisters in Christ in spite of all societal difficulties they are going through. This fatherly function, like the head of a clan in Igboland who represents the interest of his ancestor, actually brings out clearly the vocation of a local bishop as a sign of hope for his people in a situation where things are very difficult. By the virtue of his Episcopal ordination, every bishop is not only a pastor in the Church, but through his life and ministries as Christ's representative, he brings the hope of eternal salvation to his people, the family community of the faithful. The sacramental nature of the Episcopal vocation places the bishop at the centre of the contemporary struggle, as Igbos have gone through a lot, especially, in their religious, political and economic perspectives due to poor leadership role. The laity and the priests, who work under the diocesan Bishops, should see in their spiritual Fathers, a true source of hope and protection in their despairing conditions, especially, in their places of work. If there is no security in the public sector due to the exploitative, unloving and immoral behaviour of the leading masses today, one will expect the contrary when it comes to working in the Lord's vineyard. The bishop's life has to be transparent in conformity to that of Christ and his ministry or as a traditional elder in the extended family system, which unites divided minds and heals divided hearts and assures security to his fellow members of God's family.

Saint Augustine, in pouring out his mind before those he governed, indicated his love and oneness with them when he said, "for you I am a bishop, with you, I am a Christian"⁴. With this phrase, he showed how his priesthood and his cultural communal spirit as one with African background, should interact in practice. This spirit corresponds with the traditional nature of collaboration among the elders of the clan or the chiefs, the

4 Cf. Cardinal I. Dias, Archbishop of Bombay, India, quoted Saint Augustine while presenting his Paper at the "Tenth Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops - September 30-October 27, 2001, in L'Osservatore Romano, N. 44-31 Oct. 2001.

head members of families relating with their fellow brothers and sisters within God's family. The chiefs or elders have the responsibility of protecting the people, who in return, maintain peaceful relationship with their leaders, work for their leaders in their farms or agriculture and even defend them during intertribal wars. Thus, by virtue of his office, a bishop, as a successor of the apostles, as tradition teaches us, enters into the college of Bishops and is entrusted with the task of teaching, sanctifying and governing God's holy people⁵ in faith and mutual love, instead of seeing his priests and those he governs as his rivalries or as slaves. For him to gain the credibility of the faithful, he has to demonstrate first, his fatherly care, protection and the guidance of a good shepherd who does not discriminate against his own people.

As a vicar and ambassador of Christ, every bishop governs the particular local ecclesia entrusted to him through exhortations, life example, use of authority as service and sacred power, which indeed he applies for the edification of his flock in truth and holiness⁶. The local bishop in our new ecclesia has the responsibility of "caring for souls", as a vicar of Christ, the head and the shepherd. In the African traditional set up, he is regarded as an elder who should mediate between the living and the dead, between God and the people. This means that, as the shepherd of God's people, the bishop of the new ecclesia gathers God's family together as a brotherhood of living unity, and leads it through Christ in the spirit of God the Father through love and concern for their well-being as a loving father and a good servant of God.

This "spirit of goodness has no boundary, like that of Jesus Christ towards the sick, children, and the abandoned in general"⁷. In the same way, our local Bishops should be prepared, in a concrete reality to draw back the priests, youths, and others who are lacking in this spirit of goodness. Their role as *Nna*, (spiritual father) should be very clear and transparent. In our local ecclesia, the priests and the laity will be feeling the pressing need

5 Cf. *Ibid*.

6 Cf. Benedictus XIV, Rome, 1758, 21: "Episcopus Christi Typum gerit, Eiusque munere fungitur." Pius XII, Litt. Encyclical, *Mystici Corporis*, 1. C., 21: "Assignatos sibi greges Singuli Singulos Christi nomine pascunt et regunt," in P. Ryan & C. McGarry (eds.), Inculturating the Church in Africa – Theological and Practical Perspectives, Kenya-Nairobi: Paulines Publication (kolbe Press), 2001, p. 47.

7 Bishop E. Oscar's contribution during the Synod of Bishops in Rome, September 30-October 27, 2001.

to find in their Bishops that fatherly care, witness of goodness that involves and stimulates them to face the great challenges of today as individuals and as a community in collaboration. In the spirit of goodness, a pastor is open to welcome, to comprehend and to show empathy etc⁸, while working collaboratively with other members of evangelization in the spirit of love.

1.2. Love of mankind

Love, as witnessed through the spirit of caring is another evidence that marks the fatherly office of a bishop in our proposed new ecclesia. “Authority is God’s creative love. By creating man, God invites him to share in his divine love and life. The response to this invitation is in conscience and love. This response becomes obedience, to follow God’s way and will”⁹. In our traditional set up, earlier before colonization, children felt very protected and loved by their fathers, who were regarded as the head of the family. Also in our Christian faith, the bishop’s fatherly love is foundational as it symbolizes the love of God to His people, who are called to live communally as a family. In Christ, God has entered our life in order to share with us something of his own - love of self-sacrifice, forgiveness and mutual reconciliation with humanity as the head. Jesus’ love is distinct; it is modelled and patterned on his attitudes and finds its deepest source in God, the Father of all, who is the source of our true love, agape that moderates our actions towards others.

Thus, in the same way, the love of a bishop for his community is the most essential aspect of his role as a father or an elder brother after the life of Christ, who so loved the world that he sacrificed himself for the salvation of humanity. In the Igbo worldview as earlier presented, we saw how the elders love their people to the extent of risking their lives. Bishops who serve as Christ’s vicars and who function in Igboland are obliged to continue this quality of the master and the tradition which is not contradictory to the Gospel message. This is what we need in Igboland today where people feel betrayed by their brothers and sisters; where the spirit of collaboration is lacking among the people of God –

⁸ Cf. *Ibid.*, page n.a.

⁹ E. Onuoha, *Op. cit.*, p.323.

they need to be shown love and the right directive to living. Thus, in our new ecclesia, a bishop, as “vicar of Christ” amidst the clergy and the faithful, is called to be the lover of those whom he is called to shepherd as a spiritual father and brother. The expression of such love engenders hope and confidence among those he works with. Perception of the needs of the diocese and the type of servant leadership envisioned by the clergy and the faithful should, therefore, be sought¹⁰. Thus, the first concern for every bishop is “to evangelize, sanctify and guide the people of God entrusted to him”. His function also involves “the autonomy in the choice of the practicing ecclesiology within his diocese and the ability to provide the means of subsistence for work, an urgent task which does not always leave intact the energies and favour for the mission”¹¹.

We know today that the faithful and non-Christians often consider a bishop as a “head” and “boss” to whom one should constantly refer to. It would be good for a bishop to consider himself as a humble servant who listens to the faithful of Christ, especially when they have problems in their places of work. A devout pastoral leader and a loving father has to work in collaboration with the priests, the consecrated persons and the lay faithful in general¹². To strengthen the bonds with his priests, a local bishop has to develop an attitude of trust, compassion, understanding, and mercy towards them. Moreover, he should be a friend, brother and father to them; he should know how to inspire them and how to be on mission near them. He should also be able to find the concrete media to develop a true proximity and support them. He does this by becoming available to them, praying and resting with them, engaging in visits, in developing financial support and pastoral co-operation in the setting of the Presbyterian Council¹³. He has to make sure that his priests are involved in on-going academic development and that they maintain healthy relationships among themselves and with the faithful they serve.

10 S. Soroka, (Archbishop of Philadelphia for Ukrainians, United States of America), “*Summary of his contribution to the Synod of Bishops in Rome*”, in *L'osservatore Romano*, September 30-October 27, 2001.

11 J. Sarr, (Bishop of Senegal), *Three fold Ministry Papers* delivered during the Synod of Bishops in Rome, (8-10-2001), in *L'osservatore Romano*, n. 42, 17 Oct., 2001, p. 4.

12 *Ibid.*, p. 4.

13 P. Morissette, (bishop of Baie-Comeau, Canada), in *L'Osservatore Romano*, N. 44, 31 October, 2001, p. 8.

As for the laity, the local bishop has to see them as co-partners in the work of evangelization and encourage them in their pastoral engagements. He has to maintain a healthy dialogue and see to the progress of their on-going formation, especially, on theological education. He has to treat them as useful agents of ecumenical and inter-religious dialogue where the need exists. Through his clergy, the religious and the laity, a bishop can learn what the spirit is saying to his Church in his local domain. He must be aware that such a close fatherly relationship with people will help them to be truly the salt of the earth and the light of the world¹⁴. Moreover, it will instil confidence in them to put up their best in pastoral activities.

1.3 Promotion of collaboration

Our new way of being Church will succeed and progress if our Bishops learn to put into practice the spirit of collaboration and by encouraging it among the pastoral workers along with the spirit of hope and love as explained above. By virtue of his ordination, the ministry of a bishop is entirely on behalf of the Church. He should aim at promoting the exercise of the common priesthood of the entire people of God...¹⁵. The pre-Vatican ecclesiology, which we detest, was described by Yves Congar as “Roman Catholic monarchical ecclesiology in terms of the Papal triple-crown tiara”. The tiara, which rises from a wide base to a single point at the top, is an apt expression for the idea of pontifical monarchy and a quasi-pyramidal concept of the Church¹⁶. In our historical presentation earlier, we discovered that Vatican Council II replaced this structure of ecclesiology with a collegial or communal one, which, as it were, shares a lot with our spirit of communalism. This collegial or communal model of the Church calls for a new understanding of ministry in our context, not only for the Bishops, but for all those who exercise leadership and authority roles in the Church, including the priests and the laity.

14 I. Dias, *Op. cit.*, p. 11.

15 *Pastores debet Vobis*, No. 16 quoted by James Chukwuma Okoye C.S.Sp., *The Ministry and Life of Presbyters in the Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops*, in A.N.Ekwunife et al (eds.), *Renewal of Priestly Life and Ministry: The Nigerian Experience*, Nigeria-Enugu: Snaap Press, 1995, pp. 26-42.

16 Y. Congar, *Power and Poverty in the Church*, Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1962, pp. 125-126.

Our communal ecclesia is to be expressed as a community where each “person expresses his individual liberty, and autonomy as well as his belonging to and participating in the community”¹⁷ affairs. It is participatory Church that calls for the practice of non-dominating leadership (Jn 13: 14-15), “which is most effective in bringing out the best in others”. This demands an attitudinal change on the part of the pastoral leaders. They need to adopt “an attitude of trust in our people, appreciating their reliability and competence”.¹⁸

Where co-responsibility and collaboration operate, individuals in the community work toward a common goal that will benefit all the members and, in such situations, no one is left out. This fundamental sense of community “permeates all facets of life: religious, political, social and economic”¹⁹. The local bishop is therefore called to mobilize all the beneficial contributing energies and talents as displayable by the priests and lay faithful in the diocese to this advantage. It is important to encourage “a truly participatory Church where all sections of the people of God, revitalizing their baptismal grace and fulfil their mission vocation. A body that gives witness to unity in mission, achieved a lot with a diversity of roles.”²⁰ What is involved here is to “emphasize the importance of involving all sections of the Church, especially the Laity, and reposing greater confidence in them, in order to bring about a mature, participatory Church”²¹ following the Igbo concept of communalism. The spirit of co-responsibility and sharing is “neither a matter of condescension nor of rights grudgingly conceded. Rather, it belongs to the very nature of the Church as communion”²².

In relation to Bishops and priests, the Vatican Council deliberately did not use the

17 P. Iroegbu: *Communism: Towards Justice in Africa*, Nigeria: Owerri Press, 1996, p. 24.

18 CBCI, “*Response of the General Body to CBCI Evaluation Report*”, in *Catholic India*, 1996, p. 24.

19 P. Iroegbu, *Op. cit.*, p. 22.

20 CBCI, “*Response of the General Body to CBCI Evaluation Report*”, in *Catholic India*, 1996, p. 24 in Kurien Kunnumpuram, *Beyond the Clergy-Laity Divide*, May 22, 2000. In his article, K. Kunnumpuram, SJ, makes a strong plea for eliminating the clergy-laity divide as a way of expressing the newness of Christian praxis in the new millennium. Through a review of the historical process that led to the division as well as the teachings of the Second Vatican Council and the Post-Conciliar Magisterium, he shows how there has to be a change on the part of the hierarchy, leading to a participatory Church.

21 *Ibid.*, p. 24.

22 K Kunnumkuram, *Ibid.*, pp. 1-11.

expression “college of priests”, but in the documents, it is implicitly stressed²³. In *Lumen Gentium*, the Council speaks of priests as “co-operators” with the Episcopal order and “co-workers” with the bishop²⁴, with whom they share the one identical priesthood and ministry of Christ in dioceses. By the virtue of their priestly ordination, the Bishops and priests are bound together. Together with their bishop, priests constitute a “presbyterium”²⁵. While the college of Bishops is responsible for the universal Church, the presbyterium (of bishop and priests) carries on a shared ministry in the local Church. This shows the relation of interdependence between a bishop in a local Church and his priests²⁶. As it were, priests are bishop “counsellors”²⁷ as well as his sons and friends²⁸ and are not to be treated as rivals. Like the traditional fathers, Bishops must show special love and concern for their priests by listening to them and cultivating the atmosphere of familiarity of concern. Igbo local “Bishops must shun every display of unfriendly use of authority, suspicion and closed heartedness”²⁹ and maintain a fraternal dialogue with their priests, individually and collectively. The underlying factor here is the spirit of collaboration that has to be realized through dialogue as a symbol of communal love and trust.

Realizing our observed problems, Bishops should endeavour to extend their pastoral care and concern to their priests wherever they are posted to work within the diocese. They should also extend these love of care and concern to “their priests working in establishment which are not owned by the Church”³⁰ or situated outside the diocese. They should try to show their priests sense of belonging by appreciating their services. Bishops solicitude for priests and lay members when they are bereaved of their beloved ones or parents would help a lot to nurture and to cement a good *rapport* among the agents of evangelization.

23 Cf. T. Rausch pointed out that the Council deliberately did not use the expression “college of priests”. But, he quoted Osborne who maintained that in the documents of the Council, the stress on priestly collegiality is clear, *Ibid.* p. 108; Cf. Osborne, *Priesthood*, pp. 330-333; see also N. D. Power, who speaks of the “growing appreciation of the collegiality of the ordained priesthood” in his *Ministry of Christ and His Church*, London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1969, p. 189.

24 Cf. LG., 28.

25 PO., 8; CD., 28.

26 Cf. T. Rausch, *Op. cit.*, p. 108.

27 Cf. PO., 7.

28 Cf. LG., 28.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 314.

³⁰ J.P.C. Nzomiwu, *Op. cit.*, p. 294.

1.4 Promotion of dialogue

The Igbo local Bishops are to maintain a horizontal true relationship with the people of God, especially, those who work under them in the chancery by establishing a healthy atmosphere of dialogue and collaboration. Every authority comes from God and is exercised for the benefit of the community. “The first function of authority is to unite, gather and establish communion”³¹. Authority performs its uniting communal function through collaboration and dialogue that should exist within the members of God’s family. As we saw earlier, ecclesiastical dialogue is to build, unit and to strengthen the community by guiding it to the full truth of the Holy Spirit³². The spirit of collaboration and dialogue is to deepen the close relation through self-awareness within the community.

Dialogue which is a twin sister of collaboration should guide the actions of our Bishops in the new ecclesia for true faith-commitment. It encourages people to participate freely in a shared meaningful discussion that leads to positive actions as against self-centred spirit of monologue and dictatorship. Dialogue as we treated it, is a non-judgmental exercise that aims at seeing things clearly and objectively, from a mutual point of view. “Today’s man in Africa feels the urgent need for hope”³³, the need to belong, the need to be listened to and to be understood, as the spirit of modernism, the spirit of individuation is gradually giving way to postmodernism which favours teamwork and being guided by the spirit of dialogue. Tragic events of today speak louder than voice for the blind and deaf to hear and see. Today, we hear of various threats such as intolerance and indifference, wars, military coup d’état (Africa in particular), riots, injustice and corruption, monologue, and etc., rising over the horizon of this newly started century. The problems that challenge humanity are diverse and not easily resolved, hence, the need to put heads together in dialogue for better results. Under such fragmented situations, the Church’s concrete answer is the courageous and persevering proclamation of the gospel of Christ and His message of hope that spells out mutual dialogue and understanding, reconciliation and peace – peace for communities, for individuals and for all peoples of good will. As the servants of the

³¹ E. Onuoha, *Op. cit.*, p. 326.

³² Cf. E. Onuoha, *Ibid.*, p. 326.

³³ His Eminence Cardinal V. Puljic – archbishop of Vrhborna, Bosnia-Herzegovina, *Division And Dialogue* in *L’Osservatore Romano*, N. 42, 17th October, 2001.

Gospel in Igboland, her local Bishops are better placed to address such related issues in their dioceses with love and fruitful dialogue that gives a valuable attention and regard to all the concerned members. When a bishop eventually organizes a group that is charged with the responsibility of dialogue, he has the obligation “to appreciate, to give value to, to recognize and integrally support them on their Christian path, conforming to their own vocation and responsibility”³⁴. This fruitful collaboration and mutual relationship project the practice of communion within a local ecclesia.

1.5 The collegial role of a bishop

The fullness of priesthood is ascribed to the bishop in virtue of his consecration³⁵, which as it were, “has a dual implication”: one inward to the Roman Catholic community itself, and one outward to the Christian community generally³⁶. Following the collegial nature of episcopacy, the Second Vatican Council makes it clear that Bishops are not to be regarded as vicars of the Pope; rather, they govern particular Churches with power they possess in their own right³⁷. Therefore, in union with the bishop of Rome, they are joined together to constitute a college or body, which exercises supreme authority over the universal Church, particularly at the *Ecumenical Council*. In discharging his duty, the “bishop fulfils a twofold symbolical function, linking the local Church with the *Koinonia* or communion of the universal Church, and linking it with its foundations in the prophetic and apostolic scriptures. Thus, the bishop symbolizes the connection between the local and the universal, as well as between the present and the past”³⁸.

Collegiality has to do with the communal actions of the Bishops along with the Pope as the president, experienced more on ecumenical Councils. With the new

34 Cf. *Instrumentum Laboris*, n. 14 of *The Tenth Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops*, quoted by Rev Jorge Ortiz Gonzalez, M. Sp.S, Superior General of the Missionaries of the Holy Spirit, President of the Conference of Religious Institutes in Mexico, in *L'Osservatore Romano*, N. 44, - 31 October, 2001, p. 9.

35 LG., 26.

36 K. B. Osborne, *Priesthood: A history of the Ordained Ministry in the Roman Catholic Church*, New York: Paulist Press, 1988, p. 325.

37 Cf. LG., 27.

38 T. Rausch, *Priesthood Today: An Appraisal*, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1992, p. 113.

understanding of the Episcopal office, it is clear that “Catholic Church is not a single, monolithic institution divided into dioceses and archdioceses. The Church is a communion of Churches. The Church is not fundamentally an institution, exercising teaching authority from the top down. It is in its essential nature a community in which all members are mutually interdependent”³⁹. This is explainable by the fact that without the faithful to implement the teaching authority of the hierarchy, it cannot function independently of the entire ecclesial community. Thus, “even in the exercising teaching authority, the Church functions as a communion”⁴⁰ where the clergy and the laity work in collaboration. This should be a guide for our local Igbo Bishops. Seeing the essential relationship that exists between bishop and priests as well as the laity, how should a Catholic bishop exert his governing power as a leader of God’s people entrusted to him?

1.6 Governance: expressed in the use of authority

We pointed out earlier the three tasks of a bishop, which are to teach, to sanctify and to rule. In an effort to explain and give credence to the roles of teaching and sanctifying, we presented these under “witness of hope”, “love as witness”, “collaboration”, “dialogue” and “collegiality”. “In addition to being a teacher and sanctifier, a bishop is also one with authority – a ruler, judge and leader of his flock” like the Igbo traditional leaders⁴¹. However, at this point, it is important for us to make a clear distinction between authority and power. “Authority begins where it is freely recognized and ends where it becomes power, thus giving rise to dictatorship”⁴² through “power-tripping and coercing. This is a “negative type of power that is associated with controlling and dominating style of leadership, wielding the heavy hand of intimidation and oppression. It reduces people for whom and with whom we are to work to people on whom and over whom we have control”⁴³. This aspect of power should not be associated with the

39 *Ibid.*, p. 106.

40 *Ibid.*, p. 107.

41 K. Baker (ed.), “*Bishops as signs of Hope*”, in Kenneth Bakar, Homiletic and Pastoral Review, New York: Riverside Catholic Polls Press, Nov., 1994, p. 11.

42 E. Onuoha, “*Inculturation of Church Authority in Igboland*” in A.N.O. Ekwunife, C.S.Sp. (ed.), Renewal of Priestly Life and Ministry: The Nigerian Experience, Nigeria-Enugu: Snaap Press Ltd, 1995, pp. 302-331.

43 *Ibid.*, p. 302.

leaders of the Church. Here, we are concerned with the liberating power that realizes the potential qualities in others and allows them to flourish in love and care.

Authority does not compel in the sense of power or force, rather it appeals to the moral element of man and can be exercised in so far as the subjects are capable of moral actions; it is always at the service of others and their freedom⁴⁴. It is important to note that “one of the factors that impeded motivation – identification process of leadership is the adherence to dictatorial use of power”⁴⁵.

At this present period, when “forms of Christian community are changing, old forms are gradually giving way, while the new ones are springing up. These new forms bring new ways of conceiving and exercising power and authority, with corresponding new structures⁴⁶. It is important for our Bishops to know that our Igbo Catholic communities are not living in a world different from others. There are chains of interaction with people of other denominations, within the wider society and culture in which they operate. Thus, the Christian models, structures of life-style, authority and power should be practised in such a way that their neighbours would long to emulate them in order to improve their communities.

The same is applicable to our traditional elders (*Ndi isi opara*), who act as local community custodians even before the external aggressors in case of intertribal conflicts. Thus, every bishop is called to render selfless or self-sacrificing service to his brothers and sisters in his diocese. He is meant to be a life-giving and growth-promoting person. There is no place for power and domination over others in the life of a Christian leader⁴⁷. Authority in the Christian community should be a symbol of love and service, humility and gentleness. The function of Christian authority is to mediate the love of God in and on behalf of the community as a whole and its individual members and not to reduce a

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* p. 302.

⁴⁵ C. E. Aleke, *The Leadership Role of The Priest in The Parish Today*, in A.N.O Ekwunife et al (eds.), *Op. cit.*, p.261.

⁴⁶ D. Lonsdale, *Authority: The Sources of Abuse*, in B. A. Cullom, *By what Authority? New Testament Perspectives on the Authority and Leadership of Jesus*, p. 323.

⁴⁷ Cf. Kunnumparam, *Op. cit.* pp. 1-11.

community to mere “passive obedience and conformity”. The purpose of the exercise of authority, especially in the religious groups, is to enable God’s love to manifest in the unjust world; for people to see the protective and caring love of God through the leaders, His ministers.

The responsibility of any of our Bishops in relation to his local diocese and the universal ecclesia is counted more on his ability to strengthen the communal bonds with his priests who in return are bound to reciprocate the fraternity by being committed and at the same time, collaborating with the laity. What should be regarded as the roles of priests who are co-pastors with their local Bishops?

2. Priesthood and ministry

The priest who hardly trusts his parishioners to be competent enough to undertake any substantial task on their own, rather generates in the people a sense of lack of confidence in themselves and their least desire to carry on any task. Even if any task may at last be allowed the people to be executed and is granted under no guarantee of a sense of responsibility on their part, the resultant out-come will, in all propabilities produce discontent on the people⁴⁸.

It is important for our parish priests to realize that the “closer the leader perceives the followers as essential adjunct to the central role of his leadership, the better the satisfactory outcome of his leadership-influence potential can be”⁴⁹. Our new ecclesial community will be cautious to find ways of resolving the prevailing problems being created by the spirit of “clericalism” and adherence to “dictatorial use of power imposition”, that play down the role of the laity. In our observation we discovered that the impression of the laity is that they are not really trusted, not given the opportunity to participate fully in the activities of the Church because they are not considered reliable and as such, not really wanted administratively or collaboratively. The consequence of this as we saw in our earlier analysis is that the lay people who constitute the majority in the Church are discouraged from taking seriously their responsibility for the Church’s mission and

48 L. Nwankwo, *Nigerian Priest and Catholic Charismatic Renewal of Nigeria*, in A.N.O Ekwunife et al (eds.), *Op. cit.*, pp. 238-276.

49 C. E. Aleke, *Op. cit.*, pp.249-276.

evangelization, and to some extent, tend to be neglected. "Forgetfulness of the role of lay people, leads both to clericalism in the Church and to laicism in the world"⁵⁰. It is better that we are not involved in any of these in our new ecclesia. Following the challenges, we have to reflect on the characteristic life-style of the Igbos as presented in chapter four, to see what help it will offer us here. From what we saw, an integrated Igbo priest has to be culturally, socially, psychologically, intellectually, spiritually, affectively and communally mature to be relevant in modern Igbo society.

There are many leadership qualities which could easily be identified as realized when we treated the worldview of the Igbos. These values include "sense of the sacred, respect for life and human charism, sense of community life of *umunnarism*, family spiritual vision of life as people who belong to one Supreme Father, God, authority as sacred and as service to the community, etc. Thus, the Igbo ecclesia family as pointed out earlier has its characteristic qualities outside those of the leaders. These include: love, solidarity, warmth in collaborative relationship, spirit of unity, dialogue and patience, self effacing, communal oriented, sense of reconciliation and forgiveness, caring, being with, empathy, acceptance, selfless service, etc. To preserve the bearing of operation of effective collaboration in the parish, the priest must cultivate a sense of confidence, trust and love on those who work with him. We might infer that in Igboland, leadership is a selfless service in the sense that it seeks to meet the aims and objectives of a community of *umunna* by being faithful in performing needed functions and in collaboration with all the members involved. In every venture, we need to set individual efforts in the context of the general objective. All our pastoral leaders should seek to establish a conducive climate that will be healthy for the development of human personalities within the parishes in Igboland. In relation to our Church leaders, "we have to keep the Church's or the organization's purpose in the forefront of all activities through functions such as goal setting, planning, organizing, programming, motivating, coordinating, and evaluating"⁵¹ while at the same time, respecting individual gifts. This will mean "giving encouragement to those who put even

50 Y. Congar, *Lay People in the Church*, London: Geoffrey Champman, 1985, p. 53.

51 D'Souza, *Op. cit.*, p. 15.

little effort and calmly call attention to any incidental deficiency”⁵² in a loving and fraternal manner. This is where self-knowledge is necessary in the fact that pastoral leaders are not there only to develop others, but should also bear in mind that they are to develop themselves and their self-images. Therefore a priest as a servant leader after the model of Christ embodying the gospel message of reconciliation and freedom in his personhood and in his relationship with others, must be emotionally mature, competent in a variety of areas, and able to engage people on a deeply personal level.

In spite of a priestly personal unique life, by virtue of his profession, he is expected to ascribe his life-style and role after the model of Christ (*in persona Christi*), who came not to be served but to serve and to lay his life as a ransom for many. The continuation of priestly ministry in Igboland must reflect and model this aspect of service that consumed Christ’s life till his death. As regards the role of our Igbo priests today, what does the concept of communal ecclesia ministry mean for them in their pursuit of evangelization within the cultural set up? In an effort to answer such a question, we have chosen to consider three different aspects of Igbo priestly ministry that will square well with the roles of parish pastors within her cultural frame-work today: ministry as reconciliation, as leadership, and as affectivity.

2.1 Ministry as reconciliation

Jesus, in his ministry on earth, creates a new community of believers that is made up of men and women of all cultures, showing the love of God. The Pharisees and Jewish authorities frequently criticized Jesus on his mission of inclusive, but he did not relent knowing that no one was to be excluded in God’s salvific purpose. Through this process, which designates reconciliation and forgiveness, the sinners are reintegrated into the larger family of God. It is important to note that meals play a vital role in the gospel message in terms of reconciliation. When Christ eats with publicans and sinners, the poor and outcasts,

⁵² C. E. Aleke, *Op. cit.*, p. 266.

he announces by what he is doing that such people are called to the kingdom of God⁵³. To share a meal with others in some way implies to enter into communion with them. This is what Christ was out to achieve, to reunite the people to God. This should be the role of a priest as a representative of Christ; he is challenged to take up the ministry of reconciliation among those he works with, within the Lord's vine yard and in the society today, and to reconcile the people with God and with their fellow human beings. The African Council Fathers defined the role of the priest as a builder of Christian community: "The pastor's task is not limited to individual care of the faithful. It also extends by right to the formation of a genuine Christian community"⁵⁴ he is in-charge as a pastor. In the same way, "by the sacrament of orders, priests are configured to Christ, the high priest, as servants of the Head, so that as co-workers with the Episcopal order, they may build up the body of Christ, the Church"⁵⁵.

Thus, our priests are called to be ministers of reconciliation and communion with people who live in depressed and fragmented communities. Many families are not in unity; "our parishes can easily marginalize those who don't 'fit in'. Our societies and political communities are divided on the basis of race, sex, social status, the use of power, and the control of wealth. The body of Christ is divided into separate Churches"⁵⁶. Like Christ, the function of the priest is to "gather all people into unity of brotherhood, so that Christ may present his Church as a pure and spotless offering to the Father"⁵⁷. Suffice it to say that "through the ministry of our local priests, the spiritual sacrifice of the faithful is completely in union with the sacrifice of Christ, the only mediator"⁵⁸. It is not by mistake that Vatican II defines the role of the priest as that of gathering the faithful to God around the altar, there to offer themselves as sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving to God.

53 D. Donovan, Preparing For Worship – Sundays and Feast days, Cycle A, New York: Paulist Press, 1995, p. 93.

54 PO, 6.

55 *Ibid.*, 12

56 *Ibid.*, p. 47.

57 *Ibid.*, p. 19.

58 PO, 2.

The Pauline ideal of being “all things to all people”⁵⁹ means that a priest should strive to enter into every phase of Christian life and apply himself to help in resolving the problems of social and civic lives as the spirit can guide him, through working for justice, peace and truth. Though, the priest is not primarily a social worker, but his teaching, preaching and social works are steps toward this accomplishment. Priests in their parishes should endeavour to address these existential issues as they affect human relationships through effective means of true leadership.

2.2 Ministry as leadership

Igbo traditional culture cherished and respected someone who was always truthful, straight-forward and dialogue oriented, a person who stood by his/her word no matter the consequences. Such an individual, especially among the elders and traditional priests, was entrusted with community responsibility and leadership role. “People needed him/her particularly, when the going was rough. He/she was often addressed as: *onye ezi okwu* (a truthful person), or *onye aka ya kwu oto*”⁶⁰, (an honest person). Knowing the problems of collaboration within Igbo ecclesiology that needs to be improved, priests need to develop a spirit of understanding to accommodate the feelings of the laity by entering into dialogue with them as to determine what they can do for the progress of the Church, instead of nagging at or marginalizing them. As ministers, priests are called to be servants of their communities just as Jesus was. A servant has no prestige or power; he is always available at the disposition of others, involving emptying of oneself to be all things to all people.

By virtue of his mission, a priest in Igboland has the capability of winning others over to Christ through his humble and loyal service. These include men and women, people with all their technological proficiency and scientific knowledge, who are much in need of Christ, in need of true love and community life. Even the ones affected by excessive wealth and materialism who tend “to anaesthetize the life of the spirit and consequently to make

⁵⁹ 1 Cor.9: 22

⁶⁰ A.N.O. Ekwunife, *Op. cit.*, page n.a.

faith inert and ineffective”⁶¹. “Priesthood in the Church is a specifically ecclesial ministry of forming and leading the community gathered in Jesus’ name. Our priests are meant to gather instead of scattering; they are meant to show justice instead of planting injustice through favouritism. It is a ministry of efficient leadership through word, worship, and service”⁶². We would like to handle the leadership ministry under three dimensions as it affects the spirit of communalism. First, a priest has to give attention to living experiences. Second, a priest minister has to work collaboratively with others. Finally, a priest has to speak prophetically.

2.2.1 Attention to living experience

As an African or Igbo priest, a life experience as a cultural member among the people should be his guide as he deals with the people. As a consecrated person and by virtue of his calling, a priest is placed in a special way within the history of men (cf. Heb. 5:1; 7:3). However, “the spiritual life of the priest is marked, modelled and characterized by a way of thinking and acting proper to that of Jesus Christ, Head and Shepherd of the Church”⁶³. In view of our new ecclesia, we emphasize that active service should actually be a primary factor in the life of a priest as he takes care of all those entrusted to him in a parish, “which finds its fullest expression in imitating Christ the Good Shepherd and all that implies for pastoral care of souls within a culture”⁶⁴. Since our problem here is poor relationship with the parishioners, a priest working in the new ecclesia has to develop a positive attitude toward the people he is serving, not only in words but also in actions. To serve and lead the members of a parish, a priest has to be in close relationship with the existential experiences of the community members. To maintain a close touch with the members means that a priest has to be a good listener, “one who will be in position to understand every bodily gesture or language that mediates the actual feelings of the bearer.

61 T. McGovern, *The Spirituality of the Priest* in Kenneth Baker, *Homiletic And Pastoral Review*, San Francisco: Spence Publishing Company, October 1993, vol: XCIV, No 1, p. 11.

62 T. Rausch, *Op. cit.*, p. 49.

63 John Paul II, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, No 21, quoted in T. McGovern, *The Spiritual Life of the Priest*, in K. Baker, *Homiletic and Pastoral Review*, Vol, XCIV, No. 1, *Op. Cit.*, p. 7.

64 T. McGovern, *Op. cit.*, p. 7.

This attention-giving is seen as the “ability to give word to experience”⁶⁵ that enables one to recognize how God is acting in a community’s life and what God is saying to the members. It is important to note that a priest who is unable to listen to several levels of his community, or who always approaches others from the point of his own view of selfish agenda, will not be able to interpret their real experience. As a result, his preaching will become “empty rhetoric and mere liturgical ritual”⁶⁶ among the members.

The priest must be able to articulate and to confront the experience of those who find themselves at the threshold of difficulties or at the margins of the community. His daily or Sunday homily must touch the pertinent problems of the people. This means that the homily must find connection between the Good news of the gospel and the existential events of the real life of the community. Christ’s spirit of passion should “lead priests to grapple with the life situations and problems of Africa and her people. The priest must know how to awaken and sustain the responsibility of the laity”⁶⁷ by promoting a healthy atmosphere for effective collaboration in our new ecclesia. Thus, a priest who disassociates himself from the members of his community cannot be truthful to his explanation of the living witness which, by its nature, demands sharing of experiences and witnessing through activities which constitute the main foundations of collaboration and communalism.

2.2.2 Working in collaboration

In an effort to explain a type of leadership life-style that should characterize the missionary vision of priests, Father James Okoye remarks: “Priests should move from being “chief” to the much more humble role of animator, ordained to serve, not to be served”⁶⁸. There is the need to fight “the ingrained and hierarchical model of Church and the pre-Vatican mentality”⁶⁹ which prevents priests from fostering the participation of the

65 T. Rausch, *Op. cit.*, p. 49

66 *Ibid.*, p. 49.

67. J. Okoye, *Op. cit.* in A.N.O. Ekwunife et al. (ed.), Renewal of Priestly Life and Ministry: The Nigerian Experience. Nigeria-Enugu: Snaap Press, 1995, p 23; see also Michael Nnachi Okoro, Bishop of Abakiliki, Nigeria, Bulletin, n. 16, 18.04.94, p. 11; Mrs. Diop-Yansunnu, *Auditio on the life and Formation of Priest*, see summary in *Belletin*, n. 22, 21.04.94, p. 6.

68 Cf. *Ibid.* p. 34.

69 Anthony Mayala, Archbishop of Mwanza, Tanzania, *Bulletin*, N. 15, 15.04.94, p. 6.

laity in evangelization. Okoye recommends that, in the discernment of vocations to the priesthood, the “ability to dialogue and to work in collaborative model of the Church is henceforth to be looked for”⁷⁰.

Gone are the days when priests were all and all in a parish in virtue of his long educational acquisition. The educational standard of today’s society and the variety of professionalism among the laity pose challenges to the exercise of leadership and authority of the clergy. To be effective leaders and achievers of purpose, our priests must be able to work collaboratively with others, with professionally trained lay ministers, who are ready to serve, with religious men and women, and with the well-educated lay men and women who sit on parish Councils and make up their various committees⁷¹. A priest who, by mere pride or self-weakness, refuses to share the Church’s responsibility and authority or even “to listen to an honest difference of opinion, even to criticism, will be a failure”. To maintain success, he must be able to relate to all the different groups within the community and to help them learn to respect each other without discrimination. He should be prepared to work collaboratively with all and to welcome the competence of others, and to seek and build consensus⁷² generally, with his parishioners. Nevertheless, a priest has to maintain his leadership competency through his prowess in discharging duties that are commendable and lasting.

2.2.3 Spirit of affectivity

Priestly life is a life chosen for the kingdom of God and after the model of Jesus’ life of loving service. Jesus told his disciples that in the kingdom of the world, the king is served by all, but in God’s kingdom, the leaders are meant to serve, and this is the model expected in the Igbo ecclesial community. Christ demonstrated his service for his beloved people of God by washing the feet of his disciples. As we saw in Igbo anthropological characteristics, there is a sense of conviviality, self-sacrifice, dedication to service and the spirit of live and let live that keep everybody in a good mood. Even the “Pope is called the

70 Cf. A. B. Bulletin, n. 29, (28.04.94), p. 9 quoted in James Chukwuma Okoye, *Op. cit.*, p. 34.

71 Cf. T. Rausch, *Op. cit.*, p. 52.

72 *Ibid.*, p. 53.

servant of the servants of God”. Our priests should make a “u-turn” and follow the spirit of Christ and the spirit of our traditional leaders through love and self-effacement, being realized through working together in harmony and understanding.

The disciple of Jesus shows his love for Jesus by serving others”⁷³. This is a mark of affectivity and intimacy. “Gospel celibacy is a form of discipleship, a capacity for intimacy – for affective relationships – is the sign of a fruitful chastity”⁷⁴. It is even important to realize that our chastity as priests chosen among people is determined by the extent of our cordial relationships with the faithful. Wilkie puts it well when he says: “to gauge how chaste we are, a good practical guideline is required in the depth and quality of our friendship. To remain at a safe distance from others is not a sign of chastity. On the contrary, it is a kind of unchastity if it prevents us from involving ourselves deeply and caring in others’ lives”⁷⁵.

A lot of people learn about intimacy, love and concern through the sharing of life and functioning together. Celibate priestly life can be warm and tender in our mutual relationships with our parishioners when it is cordial indeed. This means that we must foster the ability to be intimate with the faithful, all men and women of good will without being romantically or erotically involved⁷⁶. Instead of limiting our affective life to anger and hatred of the opposite sex members who are in actual fact the more active ones of our parishes, let us open ourselves up to a non-exclusive kind of love, a tender, warm and unalloyed *agape*, and play our role in such a way that we will not be accused of complexities. If celibacy is not lived out as a way of loving, if it does not make a person tender-hearted, warm, and compassionate, then ultimately it is difficult to justify. The

73 R. Myers, *Homilies on the Liturgy of the Sundays and Feasts*, in *Homiletic and Pastoral Review*, San Francisco: Space Publishing Company, April, 1999, p. 35.

74 T. Rausch, *Op. cit.*, p. 59.

75 A. Wilkie, “*By Way of the Heart*”, New York, Pauline Press, 1989, p. 150 quoted in T. Rausch, *Ibid.*, pp. 59-60.

76 Cf. According to bishop M. Pfeifer, intimacy, even for celibates, “includes relating to people of both sexes...It is through healthy experiences of intimacy that celibates develop those qualities needed to minister to others, such as gentleness, sensitivity and compassion”: “intimacy, friendship and the celibate lifestyle,” *Origins* 20, May 17, 1990, p. 16 in Rausch, *Op. cit.*, p. 60.

challenge is to love as Jesus did⁷⁷. Suffice it to say that the office of a priest is not only confined to the care of the faithful as individuals, but is also properly extended to the formation of a genuine Christian community through the spirit of collaboration with all the agents of evangelization and beyond.

3. The roles of the laity in the communal ecclesial ministry

The ingrained institutional and hierarchical model of the Church and the pre-Vatican II mentality are still great obstacles for many of the people of God in understanding and affirming the role of the lay faithful as being agents of proclamation...

“We must therefore respond urgently to the call of the Synod for the renewal of the Church in Africa... and vigorously affirm the role of the lay faithful in evangelization.”

“Unless we undergo such a profound change of mind and heart in ourselves, it will not be possible for most of us to recognize, accept and affirm the rightful place of the laity as agents of proclamation and give them the necessary formation to exercise properly their ministries.”⁷⁸

When we talk of the people of God, an ecclesial community, the intention is the clergy and the laity. As we saw earlier and as reiterated by the above quotation, it has been our quest that our lay members are charged with more active role in the thinking, planning and decision-making process of the Church. This idea has to be in consonant with the teaching of Christ in the Scriptures, the activities of the early Christians, the teaching of Vatican II and Canon law⁷⁹ in the light of the people’s cultural life. In our new ecclesia, the lay people should be called to collaborate for effective administration and other ministries in the Church. By collaboration, I mean the ability of the clergy to work co-operatively with the laity and other groups within the society in love and understanding.

The basis of all the apostolate in our new ecclesia should no longer be that of the stressed hierarchical structure, but the apostolate of the whole Church with leaders as servants⁸⁰. They are expected to be dynamic promoters of the cause of Christ, not merely

⁷⁷ T. Rausch, *Ibid.*, p. 80.

⁷⁸ Cf. *Instrumentum Laboris*, no. 34 quoted in Peter Lwaminda, *The Church of Family and the Quest for Justice and Peace in Africa*, in Cecil McGarry and Patrick Ryan (eds.), *Inculturating the Church in Africa – Theological and Practical Perspectives*, Kenya-Nairobi: Kolbe Press, 2001, pp.249-271.

⁷⁹ Cf. K. Kunnumpuram, *Op. cit.*

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 120.

passive recipients of the services of ordained members, but full fledged members of Christ's body, the Church⁸¹. Thus, Vatican II insists on the principle that all Christians (clergy and laity respectively) are responsible for the corporate life of the Church in the diocese and parishes. But, at what level of leadership or participation are laypersons to be involved in today's Church collaborative activities? The lay people, in view of their social lives, do reach people at the furthest end of the dioceses more easily than the clergy. We should not therefore loose sight of the fact that today, lay people are ready to collaborate by aspiring to give life to Christian communities: like liturgical life, theological formation, charitable works, financial support of the Church, etc. These functions are taken for granted. What we are trying to look into is the possible areas lay people can be involved on the administrative governance of the Church within the same ambiance of collaboration in our new ecclesia as full members of the Church. Perhaps, this will help to crown their full participation in the triad life of Christ as king, prophet and priest. They're helping to ease the challenging functions of the clergy, if properly recognized. As it were, we shall handle the laity functions under these two main subheadings: (1) collaborative ministry at the diocesan level and (2) collaborative ministry at the parish level.

3.1 Collaborative ministry at the diocesan level

The areas the lay people have the power and authority to be engaged in the diocese are the institutions: (1) during the diocesan synod, (2) in the pastoral diocesan council, (3) power to participate in the decision making of the diocese and (4) in the laity council.

3.1.1 During the diocesan synod

Diocesan Synod before the 16th century was an assembly of priests with the local bishop. It acted as a medium through which a local bishop had the opportunity of reaching his priests and passing official information to them. In the same way, it afforded them the

⁸¹ Hugh J. O'Connel, C.S.S.R., (editor) Putting Vatican II into Practice, Printed in USA by Redemptorist Fathers, Liguori, Missouri, p. 107.

opportunity of deliberating on the issues that affected their diocese. Later, with the new code of 1983, the participation in the Synod became extended to the laity, while the decision is still reserved to the bishop as the leader of the flock. This means that the Synod participants (elected personnel/laity from different parishes that make up the diocese with their priests, headed by the bishop) have to work collaboratively for a common purpose. They will make their propositions in response to the questions that bother on the problems that affect the progressive running of the diocese, including its parishes and for the universal Church⁸². It is unfortunate to note that in many of our dioceses in Igboland, where the lay people would be enrolled, many will end up being observers, instead of active participants. In actual fact, all the elected agents of evangelization should be involved, which, as it were, gives the laity the impetus to participate actively in a diocesan Synod. What this means is that their proposals should be considered seriously during such Synodal projects.

3.1.2 Diocesan pastoral Council

If things are followed accordingly, in the Pastoral Council, like the diocesan Synod, the lay members should have the opportunity to be consulted during its session⁸³. It should be composed of priests, religious and lay people, who would constitute the majority. Such a Council has to touch on all vital aspects of pastoral activities, as it studies them for future improvement. In view of this legitimate right, the lay members of the Pastoral Councils have to work hand in hand with the bishop, the vicar-general and the cathedral administrator who work closely with the bishop. Issues would arise when, because of geographical circumstances, lay members working in the chancery for instance, will be more current with what is going on in the diocese than some of the priests who are working in some of the remotest areas. Moreover, they have as their primary objective to fight for the rights and interests of the Church, especially, when such interests seem to be in jeopardy⁸⁴, like in seriously restricted communities. There could also be cases where people encroach in the diocesan land, and then, under such situations either as individuals

⁸² See Catholic Canon Law: 460-468.

⁸³ Cf. *Christus Dominus*, no. 27, C. 512.

⁸⁴ Cf. V.A. Nwosu, "*The Laity And the Church growth*" in Obi, *Op. cit.* p. 344.

or as a group, the lay officials exercise their functions in defence of the Church's property and right.

Lay men and lay women have the capacity to be deputed by the local ordinary to special duties or delicate functions like "a financial administrator and religious director in an ecclesiastical institution, and the services of a full-time catechist, especially the indigenous catechist of the missions"⁸⁵. What is important is that the person concerned should carry out this duty to the best of his knowledge knowing that it is a service to the community.

3.1.3 Power to participate in the decision making of the diocese

Another aspect of laity participation in the diocese outside diocesan Synod and Pastoral Council is the complementary function in the decision making within the diocese. Although the power of governance is reserved to Bishops within dioceses, but in certain situations, especially in areas that demand expertise, a layman can be delegated to handle it⁸⁶. In functions like "Chancellorship", Council for the "Economic Affairs", "Diocesan Bursar", "maintenance construction", etc, lay people can be appointed to handle or to participate in them. In promotion of justice, an attorney, a layman or laywoman can represent the Church on legal matters. Unfortunately, to the best of my knowledge, in our current ecclesia, a good percentage of these functions are denied our lay members. Only a few dioceses in Nigeria have civil lawyers and they are, of course, laymen and women while many of our clergy are going in to do civil law. It is also of importance to note that a layman or woman can be a judge and a member of a diocesan tribunal, but not a vicar judiciary, which is reserved to the clergy, canonically.

85 S.J. Emmanuel, The Lay Catechist, Thesis Presented in the Partial fulfilment of the requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Theology, Rome 1978, SriLanka: Lake House Press, 1978, p. 128.

86 Cf. CC. 129, 127. See also C. 391, §. 2.

3.1.4 The laity Council

While the diocesan Synod or pastoral Council involves the clergy directly (as they form part of the officials), the diocesan laity Council should be typically made up of lay people of different parishes. The clergy can attend it but not as “official members”. In Germany, it is called the “*central community*”; in Columbia or Nigeria, it is called “*The National Laity Council (NLCN)*”. It is made of delegates from the dioceses of the country, who come together to discuss issues that affect the active participation of the laity in the Church and deliberate on whatever information that comes from the clergy and the people.

The Nigerian Laity Council has the following functions to accomplish in relation to the demands of the Church in their constitution:

- Either through consultations or otherwise, the door is open for the laity participation in the election of a bishop. In this situation, it is always in confidence.
- Effort to promote the apostolate of the laity: proclamation of the Gospel through their spirituality and exemplary good life, human promotion, seeing that Christianity plays its animation role of influencing the society for good⁸⁷.
- To assist the Bishops and priests with expatriate advice and practical help where the need be.
- To maintain liaison with other national Catholic and non-Catholic religious organizations and authorities whose objectives and activities are related to those of the Council.
- To participate in Regional and World Congresses of the lay apostolate and other relevant meetings including co-operation with the Laity in Rome and with the Pan-Malagasy Council of the laity⁸⁸.

In view of what we have seen as the functions of laity in terms of active collaboration in Church’s administration and its comparison with what they are allowed to do in actuality, there is the need to move a step forward if we really want to maintain the

87 Cf. Decree Ad Gentes, No. 21, G.S., C. 225, & C. 226.

88 G. A. Ojo et al., *The Role of the Layperson in the Church in Nigeria*, Op. cit., pp. 8-32. In this passage, G.A. Ojo tries to summarize the function of the Nigerian Laity Council from which this extract is made.

umunna communal ecclesia. The above beautiful words are there in principle but in reality, the reverse is the case in many of our dioceses in Nigeria. Generally, the members of the laity, by virtue of their positions in society, would like to devote more time to participate in the political affairs in view of maintaining justice and peace in the country, if given encouragement by the catholic members. In the same way, they would like to involve themselves in establishing religious societies and organisations as organs of promoting the zeal of evangelization and human development. But these functions cannot be carried out in a diocese or parish where the ground is not fertilized for the effective implementation of such evangelizing activities. Thus, the collaboration on the part of the clergy should foster a corresponding willing cooperation on the part of the laity, particularly, in the parishes in our proposed new ecclesia. In the new proposed ecclesia, the lay people need to be encouraged to enable them bring out their best in collaboration with the clergy. Having seen the role of the laity on the diocesan level, what do we consider to be their responsibility on the parish level?

3.2 Collaborative ministry at the parish level

We are going to consider the lay collaborative ministry (in the Church) at the parish level of our ecclesia under three different subheadings: (1) where there is a parish priest, (2) a region where what exists is “the basic community”, (3) a community where there is no priest directly in charge.

3.2.1 In a parish with a priest

Nobody is an Island. It is important that a pastor exercises his pastoral function in collaboration with the laity especially, on matters of decision-making. Canons 536 and 537 indicate to effectuate this, there is the need for the establishment of “Pastoral Parish Council” and “the Council for Economic Affairs”⁸⁹ to facilitate the role of collaboration between a parish priest and the lay members as they work in unity for the welfare of a parish. Added to this in our new ecclesia there could also be a “parish assembly” and

89 Cf. CC 519; 529, §.2; 536 and 537.

“different parish group” members who have the responsibility of meeting occasionally to discuss the relevant issues that will help for the growth of the parish community. All these units work collaboratively in the spirit of good organization and co-operation in view of our cultural spirit of communalism.

In our analysis, we tried to describe the work of the “Parish Council” as one of the important pastoral organs of the parish that should work in good collaboration with the parish priest. A priest can effectively function well in a parish only when he recognizes and promotes the specific role that the lay members (especially the organ of parish Council) have to play in the mission of the Church. Owing to the complementarity of the role of clergy and the laity, the parish priest’s mission is incomplete without the effective support of this Council that is responsible for the organization of the parish with the parish priest as the leader of affairs. This is an organization that can “influence the environment of the secular life from within”⁹⁰, and the security of the parish priest is assured through the expressive support coming from this organization.

It is this organ of parish Council that administratively works with the parish priest for the governance of a parish. For instance, the financial and apostolate planning of the parish should always be done by the priest and the members of this Council that represent different stations within the parish. But the directorship for structural facilities has to be taken up by the laity, leaving the cultic spiritual caring (officiating at the Holy Eucharist) for the clergy. The chairman of this Council (if a lay man) works hand-in-hand with the parish priest. Where the priest could not reach all the stations every Sunday, he appoints or helps such distanced stations to elect their “community leaders” to lead them in liturgical service prayers and other demands, hence, the importance of basic communities. The system of basic communities (out-stations) has to be worked out so well that they will have a mutual link with the main parish where the parish priest resides. If things work out this way, there would be lots of changes in the new proposed ecclesia, as the old model does not give the laity the free chance of economic and administrative managements as such.

90 L. A. Adekoya, “*Issues And Problems of Organizing the Catholic Laity in Nigeria*”, in Gabriel A. Ojo & D. D. Dodo, The Role of the Laity Person in the Church in Nigeria, Nigeria: Layon Security and Colour Printers, 1985, p. 58.

3.2.2 Animation in the basic community by a layman or a laywoman

The function of animation in the basic communities (which are part of the main parishes), is normally co-ordinated by a parish priest who finds it difficult to reach out to some of the out-stations that are distanced from the main centre of the parish where he lives. This group of 50 persons or more is made of the members among whom their leaders will be chosen to lead the affairs of the station or the Church in that zone in collaboration with the parish priest. In Latin America, for example, it is formed in solidarity with the poor. However, in Nigeria, we do not have these basic communities, particularly, in the eastern part. Perhaps, they are just like out-stations in Igboland of Nigeria. However, in our new ecclesia, the leaders of these basic communities should be allowed to carry out such functions as:

- Leading the community in prayers, initiating some religious pious activities like block rosary, prayer group, bible study, Mary league, Christian boys and girls association, men and women organizations, etc. The communities should be allowed to handle their financial responsibilities while rendering yearly accounts.
- Presiding during meetings and introducing the agenda to be followed constitute part of leader's work. In this case, by the virtue of his function, he is automatically the chairman of the group whenever they assemble for a deliberation. He works in collaboration with the secretary who writes and reads the minutes.
- He regulates the flow of good community spirit as he instils the sense of sharing and loving of one another.
- He encourages the spirit of corporal works of mercy among the members, particularly with regards to helping the poor, the widow and the aged in the community irrespective of denominations.
- He is always supportive in whatever may help to build a community. He does this by encouraging the spirit of ecumenism, a Christ-like attitude in human relationship. His work is close to that of an animator of a station, who is appointed directly by a bishop of the diocese. He is out to represent the interest of the Church, which his community is part of.

3.2.3 A situation where a parish/community lacks a priest

Unlike situations where a priest is present, there are some places within dioceses, where due to pastoral reasons, a residing priest is withdrawn from the parish by the bishop. This could be for the case of *pénurie* or for saving the image of the priest. In such a situation, the local bishop must appoint a deacon or a layperson or a group of members, to take up the responsibility of managing the parish - (Cf. C. 517 §. 2). However, pastoral formation is necessary here for whoever would take up such a challenge as to know what to do and what not to do as a layman or woman and the extent he is supposed to function. This position is reserved preferably for a lay theologian who, in addition to his profession, has good qualities of governance. In Congo Kinshasa, such a person is called a “*Mokambi*” while in Idah diocese, Kogi state of Nigeria, he is called the “head-man”, in Igboland, he is called a “station catechist/teacher”. A person under such office has the following responsibility in relation to his/her work: (a) ability to teach catechism or to preach the word of God, (b) sanctifying office and (c) Pastoral administrative function.

3.2.3.1 Ability to teach catechism or to preach the word of God

The parish director leads the members in morning services and bible studies. His capacity to preach is embedded in the authorization power by the local ordinary and at times, it is announced officially in the liturgical celebration so that people will be aware of such a legitimate function in the community. Normally, he will be conferred an extraordinary minister for the proclamation of the word of God before the small community. In this way, his function includes the following duties:

- In reference to Canon Law, he can preach the word of God in the nature of sharing reflection; conduct not only daily liturgical function, but also Sunday services in the absence of a priest⁹¹.
- He officiates in funeral celebrations (vigil, wake keeping, committal and funeral burial).
- He can baptise in danger of death where a priest is not available.

⁹¹ Cf. C. 766.

- In terms of sacramental and liturgical ministries⁹²; he can baptize children under the age of seven according to the approved rituals,⁹³ (like Rite of Baptism). He can also serve as an extraordinary minister of the Eucharist and Viaticum⁹⁴; as a minister of Eucharistic exposition and reposition⁹⁵; assist at marriages and administer Sacramentals such as blessed ashes on Ash Wednesday by the priest.
- He should endeavour to facilitate lay ministry of lay apostolate and leadership in the spirit of collaboration and subsidiarity with other interested members of the group.⁹⁶
- He discharges these functions in consonant with the diocesan principles. But, what is important is the trustfulness accorded the director.

3.2.3.2 Sanctifying office

A leader is empowered for specific ministry in collaborative relationship with the pastor and members of the parish staff. As a lay leader animator in the new ecclesia he should prepare grounds and opportunities for a visiting priest to celebrate the Eucharist with and for the group. It is also his responsibility to see to the organization for the reception and caring of a visiting priest or seminarian(s) on apostolic work.

- He should prepare the people for sacraments where the need be, especially for the sacrament of reconciliation before the arrival of a priest for the interested members. By virtue of this office, he is obliged to maintain a good life-style model as evidence of a man of God.
- He has to organize a week of spiritual renewal (retreat) yearly especially during lent. The activities could include shared bible reflection, daily morning prayers, visit to the sick, the aged and the prisoners with presentations of gifts. A priest should be invited to animate or preach such a retreat if possible for collaborative purposes. However, a lay person can equally animate such retreats and call a priest at the end to bless the congregation.

92 B. A. Cusack & Therese Guerin Sullivan, S.P. The Care in Parishes Without a Pastor, Applications of Canon 517, par. 2, p. 25.

93 Cf. C. 860, §. 2.

94 Cf. C. 910, §. 2; 911, §. 2.

95 Cf. C. 943, C. 1112 and C. 1168.

96 Cf. B. A. Cusack & Therese Guerin Sullivan, S.P. *Op. cit.*, p.25.

3.2.3.3 Pastoral administrative function

Apart from the sanctifying office as seen above, the lay people still have some other parts to play for the propagation of faith. Generally, in the Church after the model of Vatican II, what is required of this temporal aspect of function after the spiritual is the co-responsibility, which involves bishop, priests, religious, lay men and women. All these are co-responsible for the functionality of the Church as “they are the Church and the chosen people of God⁹⁷. Even the code of 1917 presented two natures of authorities in the Church: sacerdotal, (*ex jure ecclesiastico* (clergy only) and jurisdiction (*ex jure divino*) which is non-sacramental and more of social (open for all members depending on their functions). Before the Vatican II Council, the function of governance was not clear though seen in two dimensions: (a) functions that were hierarchical, and (b) functions that were neither hierarchical nor spiritual, but only ecclesiastical and temporal as pointed out by the Code. The authority here is made up of legislative (lawmakers), executive (the implementers of the law) and judiciary (the judges of the law). The liturgical and sacramental services are quite distinct from the domestic services of bursars or farm managers in ecclesiastical institutions⁹⁸. And this is what this work is out to achieve: creating the awareness of effective collaboration of the clergy and the laity for the new African ecclesia. Other briefed leadership functions are as follows:

- The preparation of persons for the celebration of the Sacraments of baptism, confirmation, Eucharist, penance, anointing of the sick, and marriage,
- The religious education of all parishioners, including youths, adults, the handicapped and the infirm;
- The utilization of the resources offered by the diocesan religious education offices;
- The training of religious education teachers for each of the sacraments mentioned above, and the proper implementation of the order of Christian Initiation of Adults;
- The assessment of needs and planning for pastoral care both directly and by way of education programme and training for other ministers of pastoral care in areas such as

⁹⁷ Hugh J. O’Connel, *Op. cit.*, p. 107.

⁹⁸ Cf. Emmanuel, *Op. cit.*, p. 116.

ministry to the following: families, the sick, the dying, and those with special needs. Examples of such people are the handicapped, the mentally ill, the elderly, youth, the widowed, divorced and separated, the imprisoned, those in crisis, and the disadvantaged, as well as extended parish activities in areas of evangelization, social justice, ecumenism and participation in diocesan worships and events⁹⁹.

The agents of evangelization are all empowered for specific ministries in a collaborative relationship with one another. Parishes within dioceses are places where both the spiritual and practical needs of the people are taken care of - the parents, the children, the sick the needy and all who live within the boundaries of the parish community. Parish workers should be mindful of their assigned responsibilities as demanded in their basic communities. For instance, a community lay leader should not assume positions that are attributed to the clergy, but maintains his role as a member of God's mystical body. In the absence of a clergy, what the laity celebrates is the service of the word of God knowing that through "the ministry of the priest, the spiritual sacrifice of the faithful is completed in union with the sacrifice of Christ the holy mediator"¹⁰⁰. As we saw above, "ordination remains a sacrament and not simply a way by which the community delegates certain of its members to fulfil an office"¹⁰¹. As the icon of Christ, a priest celebrates *in persona Christi* and remains indispensable in liturgical celebration of the Church.

4. Conclusion

Saint Paul, in Romans 12:4, tells us that among the people of God, there are different talents and charisms which entail different responsibilities and different positions. But, no matter what their talents, what their responsibilities and what their positions stand for, they are all striving for the same ends, the same goals. Leadership is the matrix or the centre that determines how a diocese, parish or basic communities function. Leadership

⁹⁹ T. Sullivan, *Op. cit.*, p. 2.

¹⁰⁰ *P.O.*, 2.

¹⁰¹ D. Donovan, *Preparing For Worship – Sundays and Feast days*, Cycle A, New York: Paulist Press, 1995, p. 41.

role is very vital in the new ecclesial vision. What it means, just as we have it in our hypothesis, is that we should not talk about evangelization in our Igbo dioceses if there is no project for developing and assigning good and effective leaders as pastors and lay co-workers who would be the key parish agents of evangelization. Their primary responsibilities as agents of apostolate would include among other things, to engage the people of God in the life of Christ and the Church. This also involves the development of the new vision of today's mission through inculturation as they unanimously contribute in building the community of God's family, thereby promoting collaboration and dialogue between the laity and the clergy respectively.

In the diocesan or parish administration, we can distinguish the different functions of Bishops, priests and laity as treated in this chapter. Granted that in our pastoral ministers, the clergy bear the greater responsibility of activities, there is always the need to treat others, the laity also as children of God. Ministry as God's activity involves mutuality and the sense of benevolence which should always guide our actions. Mutuality in the sense that we have all been called to form a single family of God by virtue of our baptism in the life of Christ and the profession of our faith. Our spirit of oneness in God should be projected in actions for the benevolent service and care of the others in view of our cultural life of communalism. We have to realize that the background characters we are formed of, coupled with the nature of the spiritual virtues we developed, undoubtedly should influence our pastoral activities and our relationship with those we work with as brothers and sister in Christ. Each, as it were, has different duties and responsibilities that, together, will harmonize well if all collaborate in the running of a mission entrusted to them, as we would expect in the new ecclesia.

The clergy could see their pastoral positions as spiritual leaders. The bishop, as the good shepherd, should find light in the dispensation of the word of God, interpreted in the communion of the Church, and announces the Gospel message with courageous fidelity. As a promoter of faith, he has to sustain and to guide those who are weak and maltreated. As a spiritual father of his flock, he should be an enhancer of love, reconciliation and compassion; a solicitor of priests and a promoter of dialogue, collaboration, justice and

peace among all the faithful like the elders in the traditional Igbo society. Marked with the sacred character imprinted by the Holy Spirit at the time of ordination, the priests should share in a special way in the apostolic mission entrusted to Bishops by Christ¹⁰². Priests, as co-workers with the Bishops, must strive to be faithful to their call in collaborating with their Bishops, who should treat them as friends, sons and co-workers in the Lord's vineyard.

The knitting factor of all our discussions here is collaboration made possible through fraternal dialogue, as our earlier theories indicated. This collaboration is expressed in the concept of the ecclesial family of God, the community of the faithful as exemplified in the Igbo extended family system where we give and receive love. This is why we first present the Igbo spirit of communalism that works in collaboration with a common purpose, a common goal as our clue. "One is formed to live concretely and authentically the experience of fraternity", and there is the "spirit of disinterested service, solidarity, and a common unified goal"¹⁰³. However, as presented in the Igbo characteristics, unity or collaboration here does not mean "uniformity but rather communion in diversity compatible with the Gospel"¹⁰⁴ with the spirit of *umunna*. One may wonder whether we can talk of unity or collaboration when we have different cultures, different ethnic groups and languages, different opinions and spiritualities in life. Definitely, yes! What is important is the synthesis, the love of God that prevails, ability to work and relate together in Christ's one mission in union with the trinity, the fountain of the communal *umunna* ecclesia. The *umunna* structure of family ecclesia is a "relational ecclesiology"¹⁰⁵ that should operate in unity and love, thereby, "expressing the sentiments of an individual, a family or a community as a whole"¹⁰⁶. The spirit of communalism should prevail among the agents of evangelization¹⁰⁷.

102 Cf. H. J. O'Connell, *Op. cit.*, p. 92.

103 Cf. M. Brown (ed.), *Message 28, Op. cit.*

104 Card. F. Arinze, "The Importance of the Synod For The Church In Africa" in Anthony Njoku, (ed.) *Holy Spirit Lectures*, Vol. I No. I, April, 1999. p. 10

¹⁰⁵ E.E. Uzukwu, *Op. cit.*, p. 111.

¹⁰⁶ M. T. Gacambi, *Spiritual Formation of God's Family in* Patrick Ryan (eds.), *Inculturating the Church in Africa – Theological and Practical Perspectives*, Kenya-Nairobi: Kolbe Press, 2001,

107 Cf. John Paul II, message to Rwanda, *L'Osservatore Romano*, English ed. March 14, 1996, pp. 228-247.

When talents are harmonized for a common goal through the spirit of collaboration in the light of the inculturation, the problem of rivalry, suspicion, suppression and litigation will gradually disappear and give way to love, peace of mind and body, trust, motivation, efficiency in activity, division of duty and progress as the Spirit of God will be playing its role of animation and guidance. Generally, we can see that though we are equal as Christians, as individuals, we have different charismatic gifts and roles to play in the Church for the realization of a common goal: the fulfilment of God's kingdom on earth within people's cultural life of communalism.

CHAPTER X

COMMUNAL COLLABORATIVE MINISTRY: AN IDEAL INCULTURATED CHRISTIAN WORSHIP IN IGBOLAND

In our effort to handle the problem of collaboration among the agents of evangelization in the new proposed ecclesiology, we presented in the last chapter the possible ways Igbo clergy should work with the laity communally. Following the same context, this chapter is to be a continuation of the last one from the point of view of inculturation of the Gospel message, its fruitful application within the society and the challenging needs that affect the active participation of the members. In our analysis, we discovered the need for ecclesial renewal in consonant with the culture of the people that receive the Gospel message; we also discovered among other things, the problem of faith-commitment: those who embrace the Catholic religion but in moments of crisis, resort to traditional religious practices, (compartmentality of belief), etc. We then proposed a model of *umunna* ecclesia family of God that would operate more on the spirit of communalism thereby, seeing to the observed problems. Our approach here will involve mainly liturgical worship and its pertinent catechetics that will reflect this family communal ecclesia of the people of God within the society for faith-commitment. The fruit of the mission would be realized more through the practice of humanitarian work organizations that would not only project the spirit of communal collaboration, but at the same time, helping to create employment opportunities for the youth and the needy within the society. The aim of our proposed new model of ecclesia is not only to deal with the issue of poor collaboration, but also to propose possible ways of ameliorating the problem of faith-commitment among the members as observed at the beginning: reasons why people abandon Catholic faith to establish their inculturated African Churches in the nature of renewal.

Christian liturgy in Igboland should always include communal worship that involves inculturated liturgical practices, pertinent prayers for the healing of the sick, for community solidarity and communion with the ancestors or saints and the Trinity. The

collaboration has to involve the living and the dead ancestors respectively. Moreover, apart from the specialized function of healing ministry, worship as a whole, if properly celebrated, has not only a curative work to fulfil but also promotes the spirit of unity and peace. The fears of people should be dispelled in a well-celebrated liturgy. For instance, such needs as the desire for health, success in one's daily endeavour, and such fears of rivalries, of the evil forces such as witch-craft, sorceries, childless marriage, robbery, sudden illness and death, etc., may be offered in liturgical prayers and given more place in the new composed hymns than has been the case before. This means, then, that our liturgical celebrations should not be rushed but rather be performed leisurely. Therefore, we need to do something about Eucharistic celebration, which at times ends fifteen minutes even before the people have warmed up their souls¹. Ceremonies in our traditional religion are never rushed, as people gradually get wholly involved due to their lasting time process. This means that we have to create the right cultural context for our Eucharistic liturgies and prayers to meet up with the people's life style.

Worshippers, who are daily faced with a troubled world, should find in the liturgy relaxation, and at the same time, a real meaning for the trials and sufferings of life and its challenges. God so loved the world that He gave His only Son for it. At the very least, this must affect our liturgical preparations in the new ecclesia. Our Christian worship should express the gesture of our turning from sin and the offering of ourselves, our anxieties and joys in obedience to God, whose service is a perfect freedom. The appropriate linguistic register is that of the deepest personal relationships: trust, mercy asking and receiving forgiveness, yielding, sacrificing, caring for the needy, etc. Here, language assumes a strongly "symbolic" and "performative" function. Igbos need enrichment in their belief system. The nature of our liturgy, the summit of Grace, must enhance the totality of the human and cosmic life, by allowing the Gospel to address the people through their culture. Provided that substantial unity of the Roman Rite is maintained, the revision of liturgical books should allow for legitimate variations and adaptations to different groups, regions and peoples. Where necessary, the same rule applies to the structuring of rites and the

1 Cf. G. Ikeobi, *Sickness, Prayer, Healing* in E.E. Uzukwu (ed.), *The Spiritan Pamphlet- The Living Water* Vol. 1, No. 3, July 1985, p. 191.

revision of rubrics.² Very few know the symbolism of the colours of mass, not to mention the gestures through which prayer is expressed in the Igbo liturgy. The incensing of the people is a case in point. We have dropped the culturally significant rite of “*asperges or vid Aquam*”³. We really need them, especially during prayer ministry and Eucharistic celebrations. These rites help to draw a full attention of the participants. Father James Okoye suggests that incensing the people, as purificatory or hallowing rite would make more cultural sense for the priest (not the mass-servant) to walk round the congregation with a really smoking brazier. The rite alone helps to expel bad spirits that might be around or within the individuals during Eucharistic celebrations. Our inherited Western view of *ex opere operato* should be approached in such a way as to help us develop a right attitude to real personal prayer directed to the one who has requested our blessing. Most often, the result is that after blessing, for instance a car, and sprinkling it with holy water by a priest, the owner does not feel particularly touched. Some, in addition, procure St. Christopher’s sticker, while others still go to Elele”⁴, a Christian healing centre, for the same purpose, thus showing lack of faith.

Nevertheless, funeral rites, harvests, ordination and profession rites seem to have achieved some sort of cultural expressions. To some extent, our liturgical celebrations, especially, in the use of songs and other cultural needs, those which make people consult fortune-tellers, offer sacrifices or visit non-catholic healing houses, have yet to receive expression on our liturgy. “If Christians do not turn to the Eucharistic sacrifice in situations of personal or social crisis, then the rite is not yet culturally meaningful. In the Eucharist, Christ offers himself up to the Father and to the world. True, but an Igbo man needs consciously and symbolically to express his own self-offering with that of Christ”⁵ in his cultural context. Within this context, the following sub-topics are to be treated here: (1) towards an inculturated liturgy in Igboland, (2) presiding over the liturgical sacramental rites, (3) family ecclesial ministry of the sacrament of reconciliation, (4) need for an inculturated catechism (5) new ecclesia and community child christening, (6) new ecclesia

2 R. Diorio, *Called To Heal*, New York: Doubleday & Comp., Inc., 1984, p. 155

3 *Ibid.*, p. 159.

4 Rev. Fr. G. Ikeobi, *Op. cit.*, p. 191.

5 *Op. cit.*, p.191.

and the project of religious teaching in Catholic schools, (7) new ecclesia and the societal needs, (8) evaluation and conclusion.

1. Towards an inculturated liturgy in Igboland

From our discussions above we noticed that inculturation has a wide coverage literature, especially in all aspect of theological discourse: marriage, the Church, the sacraments, the faith, Christian life in general, spirituality, music and arts, theology, community structure, liturgy, etc. Our question is: what has inculturation got to offer on the aspect of liturgical worship in Igboland?

Liturgy, the rite of celebration is the foundation of every religion, the central phenomenon in all the cultures that celebrate life in recognition of the Supreme⁶. Its importance for the spiritual vitality of any ecclesia commitment can only be meaningful when it is expressed in the cultural-symbolical life of the people or within their inculturated Eucharistic celebrations.

If we look at the nature of the liturgy before the Vatican II, every celebration was in Latin. Within the epoch, the system of evangelization was largely of transplanting into various cultural climates of the Latin Church, with its liturgy, theology, spirituality, Church organization and arts, even of the language. The Eucharistic celebration and the Constitution of the Sacred Liturgy of 1963, for example, do start with the *Psalm Judica Me*, recited by the priest with the mass servers who give the response. Progressively, the Psalm is replaced with the penitential rite, which everybody participated. Every aspect of the liturgy, by then, was being mystified; even the prayer of “Our Father” was usually said by the priest and his mass-servants alone. The concentration by then was on the chief celebrant. Thanks to the document of “*Aggiornamento*” which injected the spirit of varieties in the liturgical worship of God.

6 Cf. G. Ikeobi, “*Religion and African Culture, Inculturation*”– 1. A Nigerian Perspective; 2. The Healing Ministry and Igbo Christianity in E.E. Uzukwu ((ed.), *Religion and African Culture*, Nigeria: Snaap Press, 1988, p. 191-201.

The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy decreed a wider use of vernacular (N° 36) in liturgical celebrations to encourage active participation and pluralism of liturgies.⁷ With the theological image of incarnation, the Word takes flesh in the culture(s) that receives it. Pope Paul VI, in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, called for a transposition of the Gospel message into the varied cultural languages, in areas of theological formation, liturgical expressions and catechesis⁸. Later, the Roman Congregation for the doctrine of the faith issued an important declaration in 1973 called *Mysterium Ecclesiae*, which showed how doctrinal formulation could be conditioned in four ways: the context of faith and the human knowledge; the different contemporary concerns; changing categories and conceptions, and finally, the expressive power of living human language⁹. This document showed the dynamic and creative nature of theology, the variety of which is applicable in all cultures today.

Following the evolution of liturgy in relation to the message received in the Igboland of Nigerian, do we still think of some areas to be ameliorated in the light of inculturation? How faithfully has the local Church (the indigenous) been to the real incarnation of the Gospel with her system of presiding over the sacraments?

2. Presiding over liturgical sacraments

A priest is the president of a liturgical celebration and minister of sacraments, the fountain of which the human healings are effective. His duty is not only to lead in the sacrifice of the Holy Eucharist at mass for himself and the faithful but he owes it as a great duty also to ensure that the sacraments (baptism, penance, Eucharist, confirmation, marriage, etc.), are thoroughly understood by the laity as applied from their cultural context. This also means that he has to work in collaboration with all the parish personnel. Here, we shall briefly consider this collaborative participation as led by the clergy under the following subheadings: (1) Eucharistic image of liturgical inculturation in Igboland, (2) ecclesial family Eucharistic celebration in communion with the ancestors (3) importance of Igbo Eucharistic prayer, (4) organizing healing community prayers.

7 A. Shorter, *Revelation and its interpretation*, London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1982, p. 247.

8 *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no. 63.

9 Cf. *Mysterium Ecclesiae*, 5, quoted in Shorter, *Op. cit.*, p. 247.

2.1 Eucharistic image of liturgical inculturation in Igboland

In Igboland, man is made of body and soul and there is no division in the two. In the Eucharistic celebration, it makes a great impression in the life of an Igbo Christian to hear and to believe that Christ sacrificed his whole self as being represented with the bread and wine during consecration. Within the Igbo world-view, especially, the communication of the visible and invisible realities in the traditional religion, such stories as “man being created in the image of God” (Gen. 1:26-27); “Christ, the Word became flesh” (Jn. 1:14), “God took flesh”; Jesus Christ “who is the image of the invisible God” (Col. 1:15); “through His death and resurrection, he made us participants in the divine nature” (2 Cor. 3:3), are easily taken to heart¹⁰. With the elevated status of man, he becomes a pathway to God and the first fundamental pathway of the Church founded by Christ himself. God loves man so much that He gave His only Son for those He loves (Cf. Jn. 10:15; 15:13). It is in the light of the above that an Igbo man is well situated in the mysteries of salvation, if the inter-cultural dialogue is taking seriously to ensuring a commitment of faith actualized in the symbol of rite in our new family ecclesia.

Rite is a collection of gestures, words and signs, being elaborated in a given programme by a group of human beings within a place and in a precise manner to save and to guard human existence. In Igboland, the rite of the Eucharist or religious profession should be celebrated by the accompaniment of symbolic gestures that help to create a vivid image of the act. For instance, placing one's hands on the bible is a gesture of trust and commitment to remain faithful to the word of God. A rite is a symbol that commits the participants to a change of life, a renewed vision to the object of commitment and this is what the Igbos want. Thus, ritual would be seen as a pattern of behaviour which the people have to recognize as their characteristic way of doing things. Religious ritual has a creative impact in community that practices it. It is “through this ritual action that the being of a community comes to manifest its realization”¹¹. The participating members discover who they are, their identity and belongingness in the world and how it is with the world¹² they

10 Cf. G. Ikeobi, *Op. cit.*, pp. 191-208.

11 *Ibid.*, p. 96.

12 Cf. T.W Jennings, “On Ritual Knowledge”, 1982. p. 113, in *Journal of Religion*, 62 (2): 111 in E.E. Uzukwu, *Ibid.*, p. 96.

belong. Thus, ritual action is taken as a dramatisation of a general accepted pattern of gesture by the group involved, as it relates to life experience. It is gestural body language; the universe impresses itself on the members so that they express it in actions. It is an action which is acting together; a body language, which is the language of the social body¹³ collaboratively practiced communally. In view of our communal family ecclesiology, this is important as it will try to make the ritual celebration homely among the worshipping Christians in Igboland.

Liturgy is very lively in the Eucharistic celebration if well applied ritually, whereby everybody is actively involved, singing charismatic songs, dancing in a rhythmic fashion with a systematic uniformity of the movement of the body. This system helps to heal emotional problems, as people's problems will gradually give way to community-spirit of sharing. Every aspect of the Eucharistic celebration has its cultural jest or ritualization, which involves the heavenly bodies and the living.

2.2. Ecclesial family Eucharistic celebration in communion with the ancestors

As we noted in our previous discussions, the complete union of the visible and invisible has its foundation in Christ's mediating role through the liturgical sacraments, especially the sacraments of initiation, the climax of which "the faithful, already marked with the sacred seal of baptism and confirmation, are through the reception of the Eucharist, fully joined to the body of Christ"¹⁴. Through a faithful Eucharistic celebration, the main aim of Christ's sign and sublime cause, that of communion in the divine life, and that of unity of the people of God by which the Church is kept in being, is realized. It is the "culmination, both of God's action sanctifying the world in Christ and through him to the father in the Holy Spirit"¹⁵. By its celebration, we already unite ourselves with all the heavenly bodies, including the ancestors.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 113.

¹⁴ The document of Vatican II, London-Dubline, 1966, p. 542.

¹⁵ G. Chapman, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, printed in Britain, 1994, p. 298.

From our cultural viewpoint, one would agree with Charles Nyamiti that “*mass is an ancestral ritual*”¹⁶, a holy worship made to God through Christ in union with other realities. One of the principal ancestral rite factors is the sacred communion contact between the living and the ancestors through prayers and ritual as we saw earlier. In the Eucharistic celebration, the fountain of communion, both the visible and the invisible, all the elements human and divine are put into play whereby, the “ancestral elements, human prayers, the Trinity and all heavenly bodies and human aspirations are concentrated to the maximum”¹⁷. Through this cultural celebration, collective and individual problems are presented as intentions in the course of the offering.

In villages where most of these cultural problems are felt, priests should try to find out the essential concerns in the life of the people that can bring them together to help the Gospel take root in liturgical celebrations. The situation of the people will force pastors to stop living by the clock as they will be confronted with issues and problems of the places¹⁸. The celebration of masses ought to fall in line with people’s way of life? This requires patience and commitment on the part of pastors. The celebration of mass, which helps to nourish the spiritual life of the people, should not be hurried or celebrated anyhow without thorough preparation, considering the conditions of the people. The celebration should be such that will enable the faithful participate in it internally and externally, actively, fruitfully and consciously, as the whole person is involved. A particular example within the Catholic fold is illustrated in the *Charismatic Renewal Movement*. Participation in its prayer meetings is lively, cheerful, satisfying and committed. Any time any of their groups animates a mass with her instruments, it is always lively. Therefore a mass, which is celebrated to last for less than an hour in Igboland should be regarded as a “cut-and-nail mass” which may not touch the hearts of the people, especially in rural areas where the priests visit occasionally. By participation in the Eucharistic meal, like in the traditional sacrificial meal, we share in the divine life and relive Christ mystery reactualized in the

16 C. Nyamiti, *Christ as Our Ancestor, Christology from an African Perspective*, Zimbabwe: Mambo Press 1984. p. 53.

17 *Ibid.*, p. 53.

18 Cf. G.-Ikeobi, *Op. cit.*, p.191.

mass: love and offer of our lives to God including our cultural problems and anxieties trusting that the heavenly powers will take care of these issues.

Moreover, in terms of devotion or Novena, the presence of the Sacred Species (God-man immolated victim) in the tabernacle significantly resembles the presence of ancestors in the ancestral shrines and shows the ever presence of God, our loving Father, with His people, ready to receive, to hear and to resolve our problems as it pleases Him. Thus, the tabernacle can serve as our Christian shrine par excellence, in which Christ our mediator and the victim is perpetually present for the sake of regular sacred communication with the faithful. Therefore, through this Eucharistic celebration, “the mass gathers in itself, as it were, all the elements found in Igbo ancestorship and tradition; purifies and transforms them by elevating them to the hypostatic level of the only begotten Son of God”.¹⁹

Revelation, alliance and Easter constitute the structure of the Christian message, which culminates in the Eucharist. The action of the Sacrament and celebration of the Holy Eucharist as an admirable exchange is very significant for “holistic communication”. The love of God is efficaciously and daily renewed in the action of the Sacraments. Eucharist is not only a spiritual food for the Christian, but serves as a highest sacrifice of God incarnate, the Son who gave his life for those he loves (Cf. Jn. 15,13). As Christians, we are called to participate in Christ’s life sharing with our fellow human beings in our missionary activities and communities (Cf. Ac. 2, 24), community life of the early Christians being exemplified. The Eucharist is the highest prayer of the Church through which Jesus communes directly with his family members and as such, needs to be celebrated within the cultural life of the people. It has to be meaningful in its presentation so as to ensure effective and committed communal participation of God’s people in liturgical prayer.

2. 3. Importance of Igbo Eucharistic prayer

Igbo prayers are characterized by their spontaneity, which express the sincerity, depth and religious consciousness. Just like the Christian communal prayer during the

¹⁹ C. Nyamity, *Op. cit.*, p. 54.

Eucharistic celebration, when an Igbo man or woman prays, his/her joys, hopes and aspirations, fears, anxieties and sufferings are given full expression in such spontaneous prayers. This can only come from a heart filled with trust, faith, hope and confidence in the divine power.

Prayer is one of the aspects of life where the Igbo people in particular, and the Africans in general, manifest their solidarity-will by collaborating with the invisible realities, especially as it is made to God. African traditional prayers like Christian prayer of “Our Father”, generally include praises, thanksgiving, petition, and a declaration of the state of affairs in which the prayers are offered and, finally, requested. Such prayers are always geared towards concrete particular intentions. The content of the prayers includes: request for good health, healing, both physical and spiritual, protection from danger and from the plight of the enemies, safety in travelling or some other undertaking, security, prosperity, preservation of life, peace, spirit of understanding and collaboration, success, and various benefits for individuals. In the case of a communal prayer at large, the tune may be for good harvest, rain, peace, the cessation of epidemics and dangers to the nation, success in collaborative efforts, the acceptance of sacrifices and offerings, fertility for barren women and successful journey as the ancestors will be beckoned to protect their people where-ever they go.

Igbos pray with all their hearts and in unity. Prayer flows from the heart of Igbo traditional religion. One of the features of the prayers of the Igbo is the sense of community and the desire for communion and solidarity will, expressed at the opening invocation of almost every prayer. On the issue of prayer in Igboland, L. Ugbor has this to say:

God is invoked together with a range of benevolent and ancestral spirits who with man form the cosmic community. The praying person or the human community expresses its desire to be in solidarity, peace and harmony with the spirit community and with one another. The visible expression of this communion is the sharing of the ‘kola’ Igbo symbol of love, the sharing of which is a sort of ‘covenant meal’²⁰.

20 L. A. Ugbo, Prayer in traditional religion: its meaning and message for the Church in Igboland Today (unpublished dissertation), Rome 1985, p. 34.

From the traditional way of prayers in the sense of community and communion, one passes over to Christian doctrine of communion of the saints and of the Trinity, as will be expressed in the Eucharistic celebrations. The Kenyan Eucharistic prayer is different from that of the Igbos of Nigeria; however, the essence is the same: acknowledging the supremacy of God and the humble petition of man, his loving creatures.

Thus, for some of our Catholic priests to celebrate three to four masses a day, in such a rapid tempo is evidence that Igbo cultural system of prayer has received little or no attention and encouragement it requires. During prayer of the faithful, the people should be encouraged to say spontaneous prayers at times, based on the readings of the day and reflecting on their daily experiential events. This is important because the “prayer of the traditional Igbo derives its authenticity partially from its freedom of linguistic constraints: sometimes questioning, sometimes demanding as of right (like a child before his father), but never deteriorating to vulgarity or lack of respect for God”²¹. At times, prayers are made to God through the ancestors just as Christians, at times during devotions, make their prayers through the saints.

It is this traditional nature of homage to the ancestors that *Bantu Liturgy* incorporated in her Eucharistic prayers knowing very well that it is the highest vital place of communion and the transference of forces. This is expressed through the recitation of the ancestral names, especially, on the feast of “All Souls” (November 2) along with the petitions that accompany their prayers, knowing their solidarity-will with these ancestors. Problems of sufferings, sicknesses, tensions, spirit-possession, witchcrafts and wizards, re-incarnation and other crises and anxieties, are normally taken care of during their liturgical celebrations. This nature of Eucharistic celebration needs to find a home within Igbo liturgy.

Today, there had been an evolution in the growth of the Church and the Igbo new family ecclesia should be part of this in the aspects we are stressing. God took flesh and

21 *Ibid.*, p. 124.

dwelt among us (incarnation) to facilitate a process of growth and change, to give man a lift to change and to make man what he professes: to share in the divine life. This is the significance of God taken flesh, to reconcile human beings to Himself. Liturgically, this should be realized through community prayers, the final receiver of which is God. Following the growth of the Church in Igboland, effort should be made to make it more communal to discourage her members from being much committed on traditional excesses at the expense of their Christian faith-commitment. What is involved is to inculturize the ritual systems to be more meaningful to them in their structural life style like their nature of prayers and visits to sick people, etc.

2. 4. Organized healing community prayers

For an effective liveliness of the new ecclesia there is the need to form “Extra-Sacramental” community healing prayer groups that will be at the service of the sick, the dying and other needs. Bearing in mind the prayerful life disposition of the people that knit them with their ancestors and the Supreme God, the Creator, one advice here is that the priests who have the gift and are working in remote challenging zones that require healing ministry should endeavour to model their prayers in such a way that they would help the faith of the people in view of their religious belief. These “Association Prayer Members”, if formed, would undertake the necessary procedures for the healing ministry through communal prayers like the recitation of the rosary, divine mercy and so on.

I formed a prayer ministry in my former parish, Abejukolo, in Idah diocese of the middle belt of Nigeria, as it was inevitable around 1990 in view of the troubled mind of the people. Our prayer meetings were scheduled to be on every Saturday evening from 5.00 p.m.–7.00 pm, and Eucharistic celebration on every first Saturday of the month (called *mass for the sick*). Within it, catechists and other members of the animating team organized moral and doctrinal instructions. From time to time, the members were sub-divided into smaller groups for shared prayers and reflections. Occasionally, they read and meditated the word of God on the selected passages from the Holy Scriptures. The Igbos love the Bible, the word of God, and the Catholics need to be guided to rediscover its inexhaustible

riches as a book of prayer. The use of the word of God for prayer and the formation of prayer groups do help the spiritual life of the Catholics by deepening their experiences of prayer and faith-commitment. Biblical prayers, especially the psalms, are nearer in content, style and sentiment to Igbo traditional prayers that look poetic in nature and meaning. Prayer through the Scriptural insight in small groups of the faithful helps to illuminate one's concrete life situation.

The sacraments were celebrated within the masses occasionally: Eucharist, penance, anointing and sometimes matrimony. These sacraments have social and spiritual dimensions of healing in the Church. The group I organized normally had it as its aim, to do such things as corporal work of mercy: looking after the poor, the widow, the aged, the needy, visiting the sick in the neighbourhood and hospitals, praying over or with them.

Where many believing people are gathered in prayer, increased self-confidence, hope and encouragement may be generated in the sick person, and this will favour the action of recuperative forces that may already be present. Moreover, the laying of hands of a priest on a sick person is also a condition of relief. Through this process of prayer meeting, God's love is expressed and is a symbol of our incorporation into the body of Christ through which flows God's healing mercy. Here is a patient's healing prayer at bedtime or after compline:

Jesus, through the power of the Holy Spirit, go back into my memory as I sleep. Every hurt that has ever been done to me – heal that hurt. Every hurt that I have ever caused to another person – heal that hurt. All the relationships that have been damaged in my whole life - heal those relationships. But Lord, if there is anything I need to do - if I need to go to a person because he is still suffering from my hand, bring to my awareness, that person. I choose to forgive, and I ask to be forgiven. Remove whatever bitterness may be in my heart, Lord and fill the empty spaces with your love that I may be ever more willing to serve you, who live and reign forever and ever.²²

22 R. Diorio, *Op cit.*, pp. 169–170.

3. Family ecclesial ministers of the sacrament of reconciliation

The night prayer presented above serves also as a reconciliatory prayer with God and with humanity, vertically and horizontally. This means that the self has to maintain a vertical relationship with God (and spiritual realities) and a horizontal relationship with other human beings. Cross-like relationship that identifies the self as always in communion: a sharer in the communal life of Christ, the Church through the Eucharist. In Igbo belief, it involves the relationship of the visible and invisible world, communion with the deities and the ancestors. For the Igbos, reconciliation ought to be holistic, meaning being at peace with the visible and invisible realities. The most outstanding function among others for a traditional ancestor is the capacity not only to protect the living descendants against the attacks of evil spirits and dangers, but also their healing mediation. Healing is one of the reasons why people frequent “mushroom” Churches and “*dibia afa*” (diviner) and medicine expert to help them consult their ancestors to determine the cause of a sickness and make a sacrifice for the restoration of health or to appease the spirit in question for human protection.

It is important to stress during moral instructions before the sacrament of reconciliation, the fact that Christ position is unique and the gateway for the intercessions of the great ancestors. He cared for the sick during his ministry on earth and that today; all these services are enshrined in the functions of the sacraments through the ministers of the word. The mystery of redemption (incarnation-resurrection) exposes people to the saving power of God; a power which does not stop at the saving of soul, but considers man as a whole (body and soul), a real time we could call “*ensouled body*”²³. Christ took flesh to make us whole (true man, healed), to have life in abundance. This constituted Christ’s main function on earth: restoration of man’s original nature, peace and harmony that was disturbed by sinful separation of man with his Creator. The consequence of this separation includes “man’s spiritual and bodily disturbance and the dominion of the devil upon him”²⁴. Some of the traditional disturbances are bodily diseases, spirit possession and death. Jesus, in his mission on earth through his miraculous healing of diseases, raising of

23 Cf.G. Ikeobi, *Op. cit.*, p. 197.

24 C. Nyamity, *Op. cit.*, p. 55.

the dead, and healing of exorcism, fulfilled his messianic function, which showed his authority over all the forces of nature.

During pastoral visitation to the sick as representatives of Christ today in Igboland, especially, as regards the needs of the faithful on the nature of healing, “our aim should “not just be only to ‘save souls’ by doing this, we are only aiming at the future (post-history) and inadvertently we create the sickness which cries out to be healed”²⁵. Considered together, the model of our master, Christ, and as disciples of Christ, our concern for the Good News of salvation should be for the whole person – healing of body and soul. This requires the need to reflect deeper on the nature of the sickness like those that have to do with emotional, spiritual and psychological, as they will help a lot to improve on the physical aspects as well, since when one part is affected, it affects all other parts of the body.

Guilt complex can aggravate an illness, and the pronouncement of the word of forgiveness of sins, “your sins are forgiven you” in the name of the Trinity, which reconciles man with God and with the Church, brings healing. This helps to put the mind at ease. When the pressing load of guilt and despair is lifted, the sick man is given a new hope which makes the natural recuperative powers of the human body function freely. Thus the sacrament of reconciliation is not just “good for the soul” but is equally “good for the body”²⁶. The assurance of pardon and renewal in the sacrament uproots not only deadly sins but also purely organic diseases.

Priest’s visit to the sick is in itself a healing force. The sacrament of anointing, which operates *ex opera operato*, is not enough. The Igbo people greatly respect the clergy. They see Christ in them. Therefore, the pastoral leaders of the soul must be prepared to sacrifice their time in sharing the burdens of the members of the community. Visiting the sick involves, among other things, finding out the history of the illness, the attempts so far made to have it cured, the problems involved, etc. These enquiries will help the priest to

25 G. Ikeobi: “*The healing Ministry and Igbo Christianity*” (article) in E.E. Uzukwu ((ed.), Religion and African Culture, *Op. cit.*, p. 197.

26 *Ibid.*, p. 197.

know what to do to help the sick feel belonging again through counselling. Prayer is intensified when visits are made to the sick people. The priests and leaders of prayers should not be afraid on what to say. It is God, through the Holy Spirit, who directs the prayers. If a priest visits with the “Catholic prayer group”, he may request this group to say a decade of Rosary after a penitential prayer. It all depends on individual’s religious leaders.

We usually follow this model in the former parish I served. In most cases, such spiritual healing services are started with brief introduction, then songs of praise that involve everybody. This is followed by a Scriptural reading and brief reflections, spontaneous prayers, charismatic songs, Eucharistic liturgy and communion. At times, there will be individual confessions for those who request it, especially where there is an exposition of the Blessed Sacrament for adoration, after the Eucharistic celebration, then the final prayers and blessings will follow. On some occasions, there is anointing of the sick, which helps them recover and have relief of pain. The Catholic rite is the guide that is not overlooked essentially. What is most important is the application of inculturation as the situation determines culturally and as more time is sacrificed. The group members that pray are advised to stretch out their hands over the sick ones. Crucifix, candles, holy water and other cult objects ought to be used in prayer where necessary as these help people in their belief system. It is also important that the sick people are helped to think positively and are given deeper instructions on their faith: way to glory and fullness of life are not without a bit of suffering as a way of identifying with the Cross of Christ. Positive thinking and a life of love and faith create man a new, drawing God’s healing graces on the supplicant.

As ministers of Christ, we do not necessarily need a special charism to carry out this act of charity. When the situation poses itself, the priest in charge needs to pick up courage and interest to face the challenges; it is part of his mission. However, it requires sympathy, sacrifice, dedication and spiritual uprightness, and all these are not far from the life quality of a priest. The sacrament of reconciliation, as it were, disposes one to obtain other Sacraments worthily during communal celebrations. The relevant application of these

Sacraments depends on the local applied system of teaching catechism from which background, the teaching of the bible, God's message will be meaningful to the people.

4. Need for an inculturated catechism

Our proposed solution of inculturated worship in the new family ecclesia that has to do with the collaboration of the agents of evangelization will be incomplete if we fail to reflect on the suitable nature of the catechism to be used. It is important to remind ourselves that when the catechism of the Catholic Church was introduced many years ago, "there was a call for its inculturation and application to the local churches that goes beyond its simple verbal translation into local languages"²⁷. "Our liturgical catechesis as of now is seriously lacking in relation to the cultural and sociological demands of today since there was no real inculturation when the first Catholic catechism was translated in Igboland. It is unfortunate to note here that Nigeria has celebrated its first centenary of the reception of the Catholic faith, but is yet to produce its local catechism like America and Europe. In Igboland of Nigeria, as at now, the existing catechism does not make much impact. What then should be the pastoral-catechetical approach to be applied so that the Gospel message would take root in a given culture and also, for its transformation, enriched and being enriched by it? In other words, how will the Gospel be catechetically presented as to enter into a fruitful dialogue with Igbo culture, knowing that bible itself is the outcome of people's experience with God in history, considering the existing influence of *kerygmatic* catechism in the milieu?

A question of this nature demands real incarnation of the message, which ought to be realized through the production of a local and relevant catechism, a local type meant for everybody and expressed in the symbolic language of the Igbos and not foreign literary translated texts as it has been the case as at present. In some dioceses and parishes, there are poor organisation of catechism and lack of proper pedagogic principles, which, no doubt, contributed to the lack of faith-commitment. Thus, our aim here is to propose a type of catechism that will touch on the life of the people in our new proposed communal

²⁷ Message of the First National Pastoral Congress of the Bishops of Catholic Church in Nigeria held at Ibadan, SS Peter and Paul Major Seminary. November 11-15, 2002, page n.a.

ecclesia family of God. We have chosen to handle this under the following sub-topics: (1) who is a catechist? (2) suggested model of catechism to be adapted, (3) the “Oral Structure” of teaching catechism, and (4) the use of proverbs in catechesis.

4.1. Who is a catechist?

We shall begin here with a question: who is a “catechist?” The answer to this question will help us to understand that all the agents of evangelization, especially, the clergy should be involved in teaching catechism. However, we are living in a situation where public morality seems to have rapidly declined due to materialism, greed and the loss of the sense of the common good, especially, among our youths. “The traditional deep and all pervasive sense of God and the sense of the sacredness of human life that once characterized our society, seem to be eroding fast before our eyes”²⁸. Thus, “the family of God that has been blessed with the Good News must in turn become a family that shares the Good News as an evangelizing family”²⁹. To realize this, the initial teaching of catechesis must begin from the nucleus family that involves all our parents and relations who should train and educate the youths in the Catholic faith, as they are hopefully the first and the best teachers of their children in the faith.

The catechist is a testimony bearer of the faith. He or she has made this faith a part of his/her life; then he teaches his family and others, to help them to share in the salvific life of Christ. “Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen...”³⁰. In this regard, Jesus Himself is seen as the first witness, the witness par excellence, the faithful witness³¹. Jesus communicated to his disciples all that he learned from the Father³². Thus, like their Lord and master, the disciples of Jesus Christ³³ were to bear witness publicly and with conviction “to that which they had seen with their eyes, which they had looked upon and touched with their hands, concerning the

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Cf. Jn. 3:11.

³¹ Cf. 1 Tim 2:6; 6:13; Jn. 18:37 in, *Lineamenta*, *Op. cit.*, p. 44.

³² Cf. Jn. 15: 15.

³³ Cf. Lk. 21:12-15; Acts 4:13.

word of life during all the time that the Lord Jesus lived among them”³⁴. It was not enough for the disciples to attest to the fact that they had seen the living Lord,³⁵ but to proclaim to the people and to bear witness that “Jesus is the Lord”³⁶ of salvation. This proclamation is easily understood when it is made through the cultural values of the people by all the members of God’s family who are missionaries and evangelizers, by the virtue of their baptism in Christ. The importance of an inculturated local catechism in Igboland is really vital if the faith is to be rooted.

4.2. To be modelled after kerygmatic catechism

In view of the proposed need for a local catechism, the pertinent question is: what type of catechism will be appropriate to be considered in the proposed ecclesia of God in Igboland of Nigeria? The *kerygmatic* catechism, for example, suits the purpose here if given the right inculturation. It is like a mirror through which we see our past historical relationship with God from the perspective of Israel’s encounter with him, who continues to lead his people, including we, the “new Israel,” till the end of the world (exodus experience). Latin American liberation theology is seen as an option for the poor and the oppressed; in Africa, especially in Igboland of Nigeria, the option of liberation theology is sincere *democracy*, to free man from the slavery of militancy and selfish oriented politicians; and that of Israel is almost the same thing: liberation from oppressive bondage. The common denominators here are God, the liberator, and man, the liberated.

The current catechism (catechism of the Catholic Church) begins with the *kerygmatic* type that brings out the fundamental logic of catechesis as it touches on the giving and the receiving of the Gospel message. This involves the hearing and the responding to the message of God in one’s life style and culture. It does not talk of “*connaissance*”, practice as a command, or what one should know, but engages itself in the vocabulary of “communication” and “dialogue”. Hence, it is more of a narrative catechism as it recounts the experience of the history of salvation. It is “Christo-centric” and “trinitarian” oriented, as against the catechism of dogma. Here, there is a respect of liberty, personality, age, culture, etc. The *kerygmatic* catechism resembles the “harmonious”,

34 Cf. Acts 1:21; Jn. 15:27, in *Lineamenta*, *Op. cit.*, p. 44.

35 Cf. Acts 2:32; 10; 40-41.

36 Cf. Phil. 2:11; Acts 2:33.

“equilibrate” and “coherent” manner, in all aspects: pedagogic movements, new liturgical system, biblical and theological, since the beginning of the 20th century presented after the model of Vatican II.

The methodology of current *kerygmatic* catechism leaves a space for a continuation of human systematic experience, which forms part of the catechism following its nature of permanency. Human life experience lives a memory that rest always. Human experience forms the fifth sources of current *kerygmatic* catechism that is indispensable in the process of catechesis as it articulates the relationship between life and faith; life poses a question and faith gives the response. Faith is simply a response to life. Life is expressed through faith and vice-versa. Faith is seen as a light, an illumination of life. Experience is acquired culturally which can be either communicable or incommunicable: it is a passive narrative, and sometimes, revelatory. We can talk of religious or Christian or cultural experience. Experience has two functions: stability (like sages, certitude repetitive, etc), and instability (in terms of science that grows). When we talk of the experience of catechetics, we mean that the experience of faith lived is projected in the catechism for future continuation being expressed through cultural life of the people. The anticipated Igbo new catechism should be modelled after the kerygmatic type and well inculturated.

In the new catechism, one will speak of events (historic that touch on population), collective action or community wise, mediation of social functions that analyse events and priority of actions (activities, corporal work of mercy), pastoral liberation, all go together and are relevant to the collaborative Christian community. There is also need for mass media and for effective communication, which is lacking in the present pastoral system. The present historical situations, however, form integral part of the *contenu* of catechism. To this effect, there is need to pay attention to cultural history, like the dynamic conception of God’s salvific revelation through a community and how this will be imparted through inculturation. It is in this spirit that the bible persists till today and Igbo situation should not be different. This exposition will serve as a guide to enable the pastors to select the most current document(s) to work with and to make it unique and relevant for the people.

It then becomes necessary for a promising Christian Church like in Nigeria, and particularly in Igboland, to have its original catechism text that is contextually current and too, that reflects the life of the people because the effectiveness of the evangelization does not depend only on the personnel, but also on the material to work with. Catechism teaches

God's love to humanity that starts with the history of Israel and continues till the present day. It also teaches the need for collaborative life in communion. The revelation of God continues, thus, a need for a type of catechism that is diverse, in consideration of cultures and denominations that will help to give meaning to the people of God within their culture, people who daily need the liberating hands of their Creator and the unifying force of collaborative activities.

To achieve this, we are hereby suggesting that the pastors need to form a commission that would deliberate more on this issue to provide us with a local standard catechism. This calls for an anthropological catechism that addresses contextual issues whereby Christ binds himself, in virtue of his incarnation, to the definite social and cultural conditions of those human beings among whom he dwells.

4.3 The oral nature of teaching catechism

One thing is to produce a local reliable catechism and another thing is to develop a process through which it will be easily imparted. Traditionally, the process of oral teaching (which takes the nature of storytelling) has to be seriously considered as one of the best ways of teaching catechism in Igboland. Although it has been there in the past, effort should be made to use the traditional symbols, gestures and proverbs to make the teaching not only interesting, but also easier to be assimilated. In the traditional set up, oral method of teaching is the best way of imparting knowledge, as the teacher will employ proverbs, idioms and parables to convey his message. As a communal asset, oral tradition is considered as one of the sources of African traditional religious values that involve all and sundry, the living and the dead. The success of oral tradition helps to show the persistent continuation of life system that exists from one generation to the other. In the past, "the absence of the art of writing made it necessary to employ "*oral tradition*" as a means of preserving and transmitting cherished traditional religious beliefs and practices"³⁷ in communication. By its nature, it remains a relevant system for imparting knowledge easily in Igboland, acting as a complement to the literary process.

³⁷ E.I. Metuh, Comparative Studies of African Traditional Religions, Nigeria-Jos: Fab Anieh Limited Publishing Company, 1987, p. 20.

The method of *orality* (oral teaching) suits well in the concretization, assimilation and transformation of the Gospel News, as it is a traditional medium of social communication that is cherished by everybody. It is diverse: it could be purely storytelling and will be presented in such a parabolic form that will help the people to draw home the conclusion (lesson). It had been the most accessible and convenient way of communication in Igboland, especially during the pre-literate age. At times, to make it lively, it could be punctuated with short songs and music, accompanied with traditional playing instruments like “tam-tam”, “traditional harps”, “*ekwe*” and “*ogene*”, the “mimes and the theatre”, especially, when music is applied. Igboland is a zone well civilized and fertilized for the use of *orality* where the “word” is considered not merely for usefulness, but at the same time, seen as a powerful instrument of life. In our modern world, oral catechism does not mean that the instructions are not written, but that effort is made to communicate this written material through the popular medium (orality) of communication in Igbo context with the use of its proverbs and idioms that will help to convey the message. Application of the written material orally is regarded as a vocalisation of the text, an application of a rhythmical tone of the respiration of the body in response to the lecture that involves a total commitment of the participants. In principle, it is not the text that counts; rather, the “word” of God that is drawn from the text and applied in the life-style of the people to help to address contextually, the daily experiences of life through which God is encountered as Emmanuel.

The preoccupation here is how to present Christ as a means of salvation during catechism classes; the use of orality shows a mutual understanding between the Gospel message and the culture that dialogue with it. Moreover, it is communal oriented as it involves the experts who will work it out in the spirit of collaboration. Thus, the agents of evangelization have to come together to work out how this could be carried out. This means that the experienced men and women will be selected and trained to try this when teaching catechism classes at any level or bible study groups.

In other words, the bible is meant to be translated, not literally, but using the background image of the culture so that it will be meaningful to the people. There should be small bible study groups who should be made to share in the reflections from the world of God and not as mere listeners. All said and done, the ability to convey the message orally demands a deepened knowledge of the language, which serves as a means of communication for the full understanding of the catechism text or version of the bible to be taught.

4. 4 Use of proverbs in catechesis

In the teaching of catechism through oral process, one of the essential elements that needs to be applied, as it is relevant in African cultural process of communication, is the use of proverbs, especially for the adults; and where need be, its combination with idioms for easy comprehensibility, is the ideal. Naturally, the Igbos are vast in the use of proverbs as it is believed that in it are enshrined ancient wisdom, belief system, and “accommodated experiences of past generations”.

Thus, Metuh sees “proverbs as short sayings, full of sense which have common and recognized use”³⁸ among the people, especially the Igbos. He maintains that proverbs are of high regard in culture of the Igbos as they are seen as sources of material for religious beliefs. Moreover, they sprang ‘spontaneously from the people and as such are regarded as ‘*vox populi*’ (the voice of the people) in a profound sense. Hence, they are regarded as true and are interpretative of their principles of life and conduct³⁹. This is because, in Igboland, the use of proverbs is cultivated as an art and cherished as an index of good oratory and acquainted with traditional knowledge and ancestral wisdom.

For Zulu people, proverbs make a language as they give it flesh. For Yoruba, proverbs are regarded as “horses for chasing missing words”; while for the Igbos, proverbs are “vegetables for eating words” or like “oil for eating yam” (meaning that their function in speech or in teaching, is as important as what oil is to yam; they go together). Proverbs are

38 E. Ikenga-Metuh, *Op. cit.*, p. 20.

39 *Ibid.*, p. 20.

the marks of wise men and intelligent speechmakers, by their nature; they are brief, but packed with meaning. Their collaborative signification is seen more in the fact that they are used by almost all Africans, particularly the elderly people as they enable them to convey their messages wisely without hurting feelings.

Generally, African religions are expressed more in the use of proverbs that have as their theme, as the belief in a Supreme Being, the Creator and Lord of all things. “Many of these proverbs describe one or other of the many attributes of God in the peoples’ beliefs. Some describe His power, His transcendence, His mercy, His care for His creatures, His Lordship over the universe, and His divine providence⁴⁰. For instance, in Akan (Ghana), there is an expression that designates the providential care of God: it is believed that “the tree set up by *Imana* (God) cannot be blown down by the wind’. *Banyarawanda* is also Akan title name which addresses God as “One on whom you lean and you will not fall” In Yoruba and Igbo, this providential care of God is expressed in proverbs as “God drives away flies for a cow which has no tail” (God protects the defenceless); God has both the yam and the knife only those whom he cuts a piece can eat (Igbo), etc⁴¹. In African societies, one can get as many proverbs as there are people and they help to show not only how rich the people are in the use of words, but also their strong beliefs in higher beings in general and God in particular.

With the cultural background, it becomes very easy for people to understand the nature of most of the catholic teachings like the Trinity to some extent. As they know the intermediary role of the lower deities and ancestors in human relationship with God, it will not be difficult for them to see the role of the three persons, from which they relate to God through the use of proverbs, as a protector of His people, continuing His saving power through the functions of the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Jesus, for the first disciples, was a profound mystery: human being like us in all things but sin. He had an extraordinary relationship with God, whom he called Abba, Father. It

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

⁴¹ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 21.

was only in the light of his death and resurrection, coupled with the power of the Pentecostal Spirit, that the apostles were able to plumb the divine depths of his person. It is our prayer that the grace of the Blessed Trinity may help us align ourselves within our communal life with the invisible realities that detest traces of self-egoism in our lives, and help us live in fulfilment of Christ's commandment: love of God, the creator and of neighbour, the created, after the image of God.

While proverbs are one of the intelligent ways of communicating the Gospel message to the people, there is also the need to allow the fruit of the missionary faith to be shared with all those who profess it in relation to their personal identities through religious giving names that reflect their cultural backgrounds.

5. New ecclesia and the community child naming

Other sources of African culture that show the act of communal collaboration in usage outside proverbs are names. When one is born, he is not regarded as part and parcel of the community in Igboland, until the rite of naming ceremony is conducted by the community as a way of identifying him as one with the living. Names are not given just like that without attaching meanings to them and, moreover, they are communal ceremony just as baptism is a communal rite that involves the parents, God parents and related acquaintances of the father and mother respectively. Just as baptism helps to identify one in the life of Christ and his Church, so do giving names to kids in the traditional set up help to make them legitimate members of their clan.

According to Metuh, Igbos, like Romans, see name as an omen (*Nomen est omen*). He explains this by saying that there is a strong conviction in the life of the Igbos that names are closely connected with their bearers. The livings are related to God, the creator, and to ancestors through names that are given to their children eight days after their birth. Moreover, 'a name expresses a person's personality within the *umunna* (kindred) and in some circumstances show some identity between a person and his given name through which he is recognized. Idowu opinion is that name represents character and the essence of personality as it is among the Hebrews. In Igboland, it is generally believed that if a

person's real name is known, it will be easy to bless the person, or to give him a position in the community.

For the Igbos, name "is an expression of that which it stands for, and for what it signifies. Following this sense, in Igboland, to some extent, it suffices to have the name to know, that which goes by it. In other words, "the name should give us an idea or some notion of the nature of that which it represents"⁴². Name can be given to express a wish or prayer like "*Dozie*" (settle), which is a prayer to put an end to a quarrel. Within this context, names are not just mere labels put on people; every name signifies something that is communally recognized, either as an event that took place when the child is born or a type that shows genuine achievements and philosophy of life of some great men or the name of the day that corresponds to the birth date of the child⁴³.

Generally, Igbo names do commemorate historical events in the family or country while others too, "may express the parents' state of mind, their anxieties, joys, fears, and hopes. Others are affirmations of religious beliefs or expressions of prayerful wishes. Some names reaffirm philosophical, moral or religious truths, which the parents may have experienced and now hold very dear"⁴⁴. Wieschoff says, "in pre-literate societies, "names are records, living personal memories of persons and events. From the natural stand point, there is more in names, more passion, more tragedy and more comedy, more humanity and inhumanity than is possible for some civilized people to realize"⁴⁵. Outside the names that designate attributes to God as expressed earlier in Igbo worldview, names reflect in all important subjects of life and death, fortune and misfortune, on family and social relationships, and on moral and ethical values. A collection, classification and analysis of Igbo names will yield a handsome dividend for any serious researcher in Igbo religious practices that are communally or collaboratively undertaken⁴⁶.

42 P.I. Anozie, "*The religious Import of Igbo names*", Unpublished Thesis, Rome, 1968.

43 Cf. E.I. Metuh, *Op. cit.*, p. 23.

44 E.I. Metuh, *Op. cit.*, p. 24.

45 H A. Wieschoff, *Social Significance of Names among Ibos of Nigeria*: American Anthropologist, 43, 1941, pp. 212-222.

46 E.I. Metuh makes reference to Anozie, *Op. cit.*, found about 63 theophoric names out of about 413 names in the published degree result of students of Nsukka Univ. for the 1966 convocation.

In relation to the Christian faith-commitment as anticipated in Igboland, through her moderated type of catechism, it will be encouraged for people to use their rich cultural and meaningful names for baptism. Thank God, today, traditional names are gradually being accepted during Christian baptism, though, some of the clergy still frown at it. Unlike before when the missionaries insisted on taking only Saintly names, which were unfamiliar to the people in terms of what they stand for. On the contrary, Igbo names are really significant today for baptism: *Chibuzo* (God first), *Chinwendu* (God has life or God is responsible for life), *Chinedum*, (God leads/guides me). Here, God is given the premium. People, who want to retain the memory of their ancestral father's name, give the person's name to the newborn baby in the family, during traditional naming ceremony.

However, it is important to know that naming ceremony is a community affair which involves all the members of the community who assemble on a given date, being led by the oldest man of the family or the traditional chief priest, who begins with an intercessory prayer as he carries the child on his hands, raises him/her up and looking up to heaven, calling on the ancestors to protect and intercede for the child before God the Almighty, who is the final receiver of all prayers. God is also prayed to directly to bless the entire community, the parents of the kid and to bestow the child with a special blessing so that he/she will contribute his/her part to the progress of the community affair when grown. Such a ritual gesture does help the people to understand and follow easily the ritual meaning of baptism within the life of Christ.

6 . New ecclesia and the project of religious teaching in Catholic schools.

It is important to note that the teaching of the doctrine of faith should not only be limited to the given short periods of catechism classes, which are mostly taught on Sunday evening before the benediction in many parishes in Igboland. Continuation of this process in schools will yield a great dividend in the life formation of the children. When we talk about effective evangelization in the proposed new ecclesia, we need to know that catechesis will not be effective if there is no proper progressive way of continuing the children's formation as started by their parents and the Sunday classes. Catholic Schools have always been in the

forefront in the formation of our youths for a better societal upbringing as catechetics is seen as part of the program. Renewing the commitment of the dioceses in the provision of Catholic elementary, secondary and even university levels of education will always help a lot due to the nature of the present academic structural systems in the society.

The Igbos, before the advent of the missionaries who brought western formal system of education in the 1840's, had their community informal traditional system of education aimed at preparing the youths to be effective participants in the society. This is to say that it aimed at the traditional initiation of the youths into understanding the life style (norms and nature) of the culture where they belong knowing that they (the kids) are "future tomorrows". Secondly, the more traditional education the youths were to acquire through experience, knowledge and skills, the more they developed towards the correct attitudes and values that were needed for them to live in their local areas and make their own modest contributions to the society at large.

For instance, Professor Oliver Onwubiko, an Igbo theologian, sees rituals as effective instruments of education within a pre-literate culture and thus, of transmission of culture⁴⁷. This means that during initiation ceremony, the young boys or girls undergoing this ritual process would be made to enter into a hot-house (*Ulo Mgbede*) for about six weeks. Here, they would be taught the essentials of the culture, of collaboration within a community and of how to manage their affairs as grown-ups as they would be ripen for marriage or given in marriage after this period of exclusion (transitional stage). In responding to the question of their practice in such secluded situation, one of those initiated has this to say:

These lessons, the same had been taught to all those who had gone before us, confined themselves to outlining the sort of conduct befitting a man: to be absolutely straightforward, to fulfil our duties towards God, towards our parents, our superiors and our neighbours. And as we had to tell nothing of what we learned, either to women or to the uninitiated⁴⁸.

47 O.A. Onwubiko, *The Theory and Practice of Inculturation – An African Perspective*, Nigeria-Enugu: Snaap Press, 1992. p. 41.

48 C. Laye, *The African Child*. Great Britain, Fontana/Collins, 1981 (1954), p. 51 in Onwubiko, *Op. cit.*, p. 42.

This type of education is so holistic that it takes care of the physical, emotional, psychological and intellectual spheres in view of all human development within the cultural system. Being an initiation ceremony, the initiands are not allowed to reveal the processes, lest its mystifying nature ceases to be and people begin to be less curious in entering for it. Thus, “rituals reveal values at their deepest level and men express in ritual what moves them most, and since the form of expression is conventionalized and obligatory, it is the values of the group that are revealed”⁴⁹. Traditional education, that had religion and moral teachings as its base, was very formative in the lives of the youths for their societal services before the advent of Christianity. As we saw earlier in chapter five, the established educational system of the missionaries was a means of propagation of evangelization as religious teaching was very fundamental.

In 1970, immediately after the Nigerian-Biafra war, the government (state and federal) took over of schools (primary, secondary and high school levels from their private agents and, consequently, catechism was removed from the curriculum as religion is no longer thought in schools, unlike what it used to be during the time of the early missionaries. Since the government took-over schools, there are no longer “religious classes”, but what is called “religious knowledge”, which constitutes part of the academic project in the country, is instead, being taught as a moral instruction. The structure of this teaching has no credence, just to enable the kids pass their exams and not necessarily for their spiritual formation. To arrest this ugly situation, we are proposing the joint co-relation between school, religion and society. This means that the project of school should also be the project of the society where the word of God illumines, animates, inspires and purifies the society through education, as the students who acquire this knowledge try to put it in practice to maintain justice and equity. “Our young people should be the Church of today and tomorrow. It is imperative that we provide them with schools that are ready to address their spiritual, moral and academic needs”⁵⁰. In addition to the seminary formation, as

49 A. G. Leonard, *The lower Niger And Its Tribes*, London: Frank Cass, 1968, p. 435.

50 Words of the Catholic Bishops of US during one of their Conferences, titled: “*Renewing Our Commitment to Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools in the Third Millennium*”, in June 16-18, quoted by J. Filteau in his article: “*Education Plays vital Role in Church Mission*” in San Angelo diocesan periodical Newspaper called *Angelus*, Vol. XXXI, no. 7, July 2005, p. 6.

earlier treated, we strongly believe that societal juvenile delinquent problems will be arrested to some extent if sound education is given to the youths from the point of view of their cultural lives.

It is our conviction that Catholic school, just like before the Nigerian-Biafra war, will continue to be one of the most efficient processes available for today's youth evangelization. Moreover, the economically disadvantaged village community young people will also avail themselves of such opportunities where considerations are always given to the less privileged families. Such a progressive venture will eventually become a challenge to our public school systems that are devoid of religious teaching as parents will prefer their kids to attend mission schools where morality is thought and teachers are more committed to teach. Moreover, in comparison with public schools, mission and private schools do produce qualitative students who grow up to be more responsible in the society than those who passed through the government schools.

If possible, education project has to be put in a chart or slide form for easy communication. This will help to produce real qualitative candidates, experts, who will be able to handle the problems of the society - (*instrumentalization* of students, future catechism teachers in schools and parishes). This is important, especially, as some States are calling on the mission leaders to take back their schools or in a way, encouraging them to set up more academic blocks for the youths. We need trained catechists and spiritual animators as lay people to work with their priests in view of our new ecclesia and this demands people who have acquired the faith and are ready to impart it to others.

Youthful age is undoubtedly the most tender, most formative and most impressionable stage of human development. The moral aspect of education is very primary in a child's life for a balanced personality education. A child of today cannot develop to be a responsible and dynamic member of tomorrow's societal progress, unless he is assured of a healthy spiritual environment, which is conducive to his moral, social and physical well-being. If our youths are neglected and deprived of their youthful age due to the lack of moral probity and the excitement and joy associated with it, the world as a

whole will be said to have been deprived of the potential human resources for social progress, economic development, peace and order, social stability and good citizenry⁵¹.

Therefore, in our proposed new ecclesia as expected in Igboland, education has to be organised in a high-quality co-operative relationship, with courses well stream-lined (good pedagogy and motivation). This should have religious teaching as compulsorily as part of the programme, having para-scholarly activities (extra-curriculum activities) and contextually oriented programmes (culturally). Such a round education programme has to involve among other things: intellectual, spiritual, psychological, technological and inter-human relationship that includes cultural, social and emotional maturity, as these youths grow up. Thus, the knitting process here is religion, which gives meaning to all the other disciplines in the formation of human character. Religion is the heart of a society, and the latter ought to be democratic as to give civil right, respect and liberty to citizens. The “Good News” requires a profound insertion through education, by which the Church becomes part of the given society⁵². The proclamation of this Good News has passed from age to age till our own generation. The question is then how are we, the catechists of today, going to continue this vital message in such a manner that the *Kerygma* will take root in the cultural life of the Igbos? In other words, what is the practical benefit of the Church’s mission of evangelization through education in the proposed new ecclesia, in terms of societal well-being?

7. New ecclesia and the societal needs

Hoping that education will be given premium in our new style of evangelization as proposed above for the youths and for all those who need it, the next issue is how to direct or work with the enlightened laity so that the past mistakes of the people will be corrected. This is with a view to building up the community together, instead of fragmentalizing or brutalizing one another as people act individually. This is because, in the past, Africa, no doubt, has suffered a lot due to poor political administration caused by military dictatorship

51 Cf. Mr. Mishra, *Op. cit.*, page n.a.

52 Cf. Vat. II, A.G., 10.

and the spirit of individualism: Angola, Southern Sudan, Liberia, Sierra-Leone, Somalia, Burundi, Rwanda and Nigeria, have a common characteristic of a political independence that ended in chaos.

African countries need the liberating voice of God who will send a *prophetic-revolutionary* Moses, having had the prayers of his people through the new family ecclesial project. The favourable channel of presenting this is through formal or informal education process that has to be expressed within the community of *umunna*, especially in Igboland as it touches the realities of the people within their culture. In our context, effort has to be made to give the people a real vision of God who is a liberator through Christ in the catechetical instructions, so as to face in togetherness, and more particularly, through prayers, as we have it in our nation: “Nigeria in distress”, the great threats to humanity. The loving God continues from generation to generation, his unalloyed alliance to humanity. Hence the love of God is translated into communion of fraternal and collaborative participation and dedication to corporal work of mercy by helping the needy to experience this love of *agape* in action. What we are talking here is that there is need to have the essential sources of the Church from which local communities will base their work and action for the benefit of all, especially, the needy, the poor and less privileged ones in the society who are parts of the ecclesia family of God.

When the Church operates as a family, there is social, economic and religious cares that all the members, especially the less privileged, do get through the fraternal care of the other privileged members. Under such a spirit, people, especially, the unemployed (or victims of employment) and the poor, are motivated and encouraged to be engaged in developmental self-help projects (such as construction of bridges and roads, building of community schools, clinics, etc.) with the assistance of the government or different religious or economic organizations. Such a project will fare well in Igboland of Nigeria under *Community Rural Development Projects*, whereby each community tries to embark on some projects for development. This system as a prospective future project will work out well in our context under social communitarian undertaking, especially when it is organized through clergy-laity collaboration, as they are highly respected by the people and by the government too. Such effort needs to be encouraged and such uniting spirit should also find its way in the Church’s communitarian organization, whereby the poor and less

privileged are taught on how to overcome their present predicaments economically, socially and spiritually.

Many individuals are ready to embark on such profiting self-engagement projects but lack the basic finance to begin. Therefore, it becomes a challenge to the Church to encourage humanitarian assistance to the less privileged to enable them survive the challenging economic crisis that is staring them in the face. We have Catholic members who are really rich in Igboland while the majority of the people are poor. Such privileged rich people should be encouraged to either loan money to youths to begin business or they themselves establish mini-industries that will help to give employment to the people. This process is possible because in Nigeria, the faithful respect and honour the words of the clergy whom they regard as God's mouth-piece. Moreover, there is need to instruct these youths and the poor in general on how to survive their conditions through self-effort. This, no doubt, will help masses of youths today to think of something doing. Dioceses could also establish mini-economical projects like film stations, opening up banks, cloth's making, fashion and shops, etc., for the engagement of the youths that can help to give them employment, instead of roaming the streets doing nothing.

Moreover, the Nigerian government in many States does call for loan taking to enable people to be self-employed. A long time is given for the encouragement of this self-help project so that people will trade with this obtained loan at their own profit only to remit a little percentage of the interest periodically to the government. The aim is not only to alleviate the problem of unemployment, but also to develop some sense of "human dignity and self confidence" on our youths, mainly. No doubt that such a venture will help to a greater extent in alleviating the problems of evil in the society, especially arm-rubbery and social violence, self-destruction, the spirit of parents' dependence and establishment of sects here and there. It will also help them to have focus in their faith-commitment as their main problem is to be employed to enable them build their own families and settle down to participate actively in the worship of God.

Our suggestion that the Church can be of help could be looked at from two viewpoints: on the personal level and on the group level respectively. On the personal level, the needy can seek education and training which may enable them to be employed so as to better their lives in the society. On the group level, low income or poor people can join together in self-help as suggested above or in community groups, forming co-operatives or partnerships by engaging in buying and selling together some produce. Such a situation actually needs a collaborative effort of everybody, if a success is to be recorded communally. In this case, Christians, irrespective of denominations (or religions like Moslems and traditional religionists), etc., need to be more united in fighting against poverty and human need in the best way they can, especially by helping people to be engaged in finding solutions to their problems. Unity is strength and this works well for the spirit of *koinonia* among the members through mutual collaboration with a common purpose – we all belong to one family of God. God is our Father, Christ is our brother and we are brothers and sisters of Christ within the family of God.

8. Conclusion

Our theological truth is that the “Word” of God is not given to man in a vacuum, but always contextualized. This implies that it is always applied to a people who have a cultural worldview, language, ritual and social structures of their own. It is therefore imperative to understand that for the Gospel News to take root, it must have to be inculturated, meaning that it has to be concretely oriented to the structural life of the culture that receives it within its world-view. The world-view here stands for a guide to life and actions; it is complemented by a system of values that indicate certain norms that govern life and points to goals to be pursued⁵³.

Inculturation of the liturgy helps to present a deeper understanding of the Gospel message to render present to man, in his historical cultural situation, the salvific revelation in Jesus Christ. The Igbo liturgies manifest their conceptual world-view of life in relationship with the ancestors whose role is associated with that of Christ and the saints in heaven through their supernatural status. Such liturgies are “life enhancer, vivifying and

53 Amaladoss, Inculturation as practiced in India, Rome: Dharmaram Publications, Bangalore, 1992, p. 22.

permeative into the core of the life of the people. They abound in symbolism and are made communicative through their selective words and languages. More of these should be exploited for Christian liturgical enrichment. This calls for a deeper dialogue. True Christian dialogue can never exclude nor rest indifferent to the aims of evangelization. The regard for the use of our cultural values should not constitute a problem if the Christian faith is in harmony and in true dialogue with traditional religion of the people.

Following the contemporary world-view of incarnation and appropriation of the “Good News”, every continent today tries to maintain a cultural way of imparting this message of salvation. In our context, we are trying the possible concepts for this task of deepening the message through a reflection of “proper African theology, proper African way of collaboration through education” that is relevant to its culture and to the life-style of the people. This involves also a process to present the image of Christ in such a way that it will help to address the contextual socio-political, economic and religious challenges that bewitch the people daily.

The focal point of this dissertation, as expressed earlier, is on the functionality of the new ecclesia; the ultimate goal of which is the communal application of collaboration within the context of inculturation, bearing in mind the challenges of Christianity in Igboland: to establish a dialogue between the Gospel message and the culture of the people for the development of authentic Christianity. Evangelization and conversion presuppose the continuance of an inter-faith dialogue as part of the inculturation process.⁵⁴ From our discussions so far, we can deduce that the primary objective of inculturation is not the external (and unenculturated) missionary (which will operate just at the level of planting), but the concrete Christian community, which is the living growing Church⁵⁵. This is because an external missionary may not follow the structure of the people’s cultural life; he needs to know the culture of the people for effective evangelization. Working together in the spirit of love and understanding, we come to realize that “catechesis begins in the home and deepens in the parish”. However, we highlighted that effort should be made to teach religion in primary and secondary schools so that the youths will not forget their spiritual life that is fundamental for their being.

54 A. Shorter, : Towards a Theology of Inculturation, New York, Orbis Books, 1992, p.100.

55 Cf. L. J. Luzbetak, : The Church and Cultures, Techny 1963, p. 341.

For this reason, catechists, men and women, working in collaboration with the parish priest are needed for the realization of this vision. Catechetical institutes in all our ecclesiastical Provinces should endeavour to train out catechists and other lay apostolate men and women to be agents of evangelization in our new ecclesial community. The effort is not only to establish this, but to ensure that the clergy work collaboratively with laity without exploitation and rancour. There should be education and formation in the faith for Catholic adults in dioceses and parishes, especially on Saturdays and Sundays. “The tradition of the Catholic Church in building and staffing educational institutions should be given impetus”⁵⁶. In the words of the Nigerian Catholic Bishops in one of their recent congresses: “The youth, as the future of the Church should be the object of special pastoral care through liturgies directed to them and through dedicated and competent chaplains at our colleges and universities”⁵⁷. Moreover, “under such guidance, youths will be encouraged and empowered to be the primary evangelizers to those in their own peer group. In this way, the temptation to join secret cults will be lessened”⁵⁸.

The application of education in the economic, political and social growth of a nation, helps to strengthen the argument for a standard and qualitative formation of our future tomorrows and animators. The early Catholic missionaries were able to succeed in winning the hearts of the people not because they preached wonderfully so well in comparison with other denominations, or that their applied method in condemning the culture of the people was the best, but mainly because they articulated the social and economic needs of the people and responded favourable towards them. They were importing food items, medicinal drugs, etc., from their countries; coupled with the fact that they established tertiary workshops for economic yielding purposes, just to help the people on their socio-economic poverty.

Experience has shown that solutions to many problems today depend to a greater extent on the nature and level of education and its appropriate use. Moreover, the level of

56 Message of the First National Pastoral Congress of the Catholic Nigerian Bishops, *Op. cit.* page n.a.

57 *Ibid.*

58 *Ibid.*

education is likely to offer the highest returns, the right balance between technical and general education, and the combinations of inputs and technologies that are likely to produce the greatest output of skills and knowledge. It helps people to be most effective at work. However, this depends to some degree on fiscal planning conditions, human endowments and educational priority that are based on holistic formation of personality with a strong spirituality acquired through religion.

Finally, the Church today talks of “new ministry”, new ways of worship, as against the traditional method that authorises only the clergy to exercise the ecclesiastical authority. In the new ministerial worship, the clergy and the laity are involved for the dynamic response of the Church to the needs of the modern age. This calls for active service and the spirit of harmony and fraternity among the clergy-laity collaboration whose worship embraces the living and the dead. Thus, African family ecclesia we are dealing with is more of a *koinonia*, meaning Church as reciprocity, as communion and as collaboration through effective dialogue of inculturation. As earlier pointed out in this dissertation, the “Gospel message”, in most cases, passes easily through the lay people, who are in closer contact with the world, than the clergy. This is because, through the members, the Church goes beyond the word, Sacraments and Eucharistic celebrations, and opens up its fruitful treasures into the societal dimension to shower its love, care and Christian corporal work of mercy and services to every human being in need. The life experienced through the communal Eucharistic celebration is relived in a wider society by responding to the economic and social needs of the people. Therefore, “we should witness in our parishes a model of collaboration between priests, religious and laymen and women, so that the gifts and talents of all members of God's family are put at the service of evangelization”⁵⁹. Parish structures and modes of administration should be modelled upon the family collaborative system of ecclesia that involves the living faithful, the ancestors, the saints and all the heavenly bodies with the root in the Trinity. Christian liturgies should also reflect the same gesture of understanding where people live and operate as God children of the same family.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

PART FOUR: PROSPECTIVE, SUMMARY AND FINAL CONCLUSION

Having presented synoptically the vital points for the possible solution of our problems in part three, the intervention, we shall continue the process here, but paying more attention on the dynamism that has to base fundamentally on the relevant sources of our interpretation. These are the applications of the new ecclesia through the guide of the scriptures, cultural values and the teaching of the Vatican II, the magisterium, etc. What is fundamental here is the application of inculturation for the root taking of the gospel message.

Moreover, in our discussion in part three, we tried to explore various views that enabled us to reflect extensively on our problem of faith incarnation through the use of effective collaboration among the agents of inculturation. With the social sciences, anthropological, theological and biblical background insights, we have been able to articulate the understanding of ecclesia that suits today's mission. Also we have seen that collaboration entails the cooperation of all the agents of evangelization. As we propose *umunna* communal ecclesia that has its cultural origin from the extended family system, and Trinity as its theological base that favours unity in diversity, this part of our dissertation will complement the interventional perspectives previously treated. It will help to summarize what we have treated in the previous three parts while at the same time, presenting practical proposals for effective collaboration among the agents of evangelization in the light of prospective, the fourth step of our method.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

We have finally come to the conclusion of our dissertation. Thus, our presentation in this dissertation is to show that challenges of evangelization in Igboland in particular and Africa in general are obvious tasks for the clergy and the laity who should work in collaboration in order to meet up with these existential phenomena. The members of the Igbo family ecclesia have the responsibility and the right to participate in making a Christian community an effective sign for the realization of God's kingdom on earth. Unlike the Council of Trent that vested a lot of power on the clergy, 1 Peter 2: 9-10, chapter II of *Lumen Gentium* helped us to understand the unity of the members of God's people. The ecclesial family communities, as people of God, are called as agents of evangelization to work in collaboration, in peace and in harmony, in response to their vocation as Christians. As God's children, we all are incorporated into the Church sharing Christ's priestly, prophetic and royal offices. In virtue of our faith, we become new creatures that enjoy rights as well as responsibilities within the *umunna* ecclesial family of God. Gone are the days when a group, and majority for that matter, was used as mere tool for the accomplishment of the work of the few, the clergy. We are all committed (clergy and laity) as members of God's family to propagate the faith within our cultures. To effectuate this, a call to evangelization in Africa must not be disassociated from the cultural life of the people if we want the Gospel message to be rooted.

Moreover, the agents of evangelization, (clergy and laity alike) must have to discern the mind of the master, Jesus Christ, on what collaboration means in the new proposed ecclesial family of God. It involves the acknowledgement of charism and competence among the members as we have presented it. This, of course, goes with the immediate need of the faithful, the laity to work as a team with the clergy as people of God's family. This is important because there are among the faithful, those who are professionals in their fields and willing to handle certain special functions in the Church, but are denied the opportunity or rather are indirectly being used as stooges that need to be thrown out at will, without remorse of conscience or respect due to them.

The central theme of our problem is lack of cultural and historical collaboration among some of the agents of evangelization, clergy and laity respectively due to the nature of the inherited ecclesiology. Cultural, in the sense that Africans in general and Igbos in particular have ways of collaborating, which were neglected by the early missionaries, hence, the implementation of colonial type of evangelization as previously observed. The ways Christ approached his mission which was continued by the early Christians as true signs of collaboration were, to some reasonable extent, neglected. The synthesis of these good practised models that have existed in history, including the teaching of Vatican II, constitutes the background references for the writer's new proposed ecclesia in Igboland of Africa: Church-as-communal people of God. To accomplish our work, we chose the praxiological method that involves observation (description, analysis), interpretation, intervention and prospective and followed it up to the end. Thus, in our conclusion, we shall present (1) a brief synthesis of our dissertation according to the method applied. This will be followed with (2) how the specific problem of collaboration through the existing ecclesial structure in Igboland, as observed, has been treated. To this effect, we will proceed by presenting the synthesis of some of the salient points of the thesis about clergy-laity collaboration, collaboration in the seminary and Christianity in dialogue with African religion/culture. Finally, (3) we will present a brief conclusion that will contain some reflections and recommendations, thereby, reiterating the essential ingredients for effective collaboration in Igbo dioceses, parishes and seminary houses of formation, having projected the salient points of our wishful prospective.

1. In view of our applied method

The first part of our method had to do with observation that presented the problem we dealt with in this dissertation. It is the problem of poor collaboration among the agents of evangelization, caused by the existing nature of the ecclesiology, which was treated under clergy-laity relationship. Through this exposition, it was discovered that the nature of seminary formation constitutes a major share to this problem. The formation in the seminary lacks, to some extent, the mutual nature of collaboration or a healthy human relationship that respects personality of the other and allows free flow of education and

communication, etc., as observed. Moreover, it does not take into consideration the culture of the people owing to the fact that the early missionary evangelizers applied a method that neglected the cultural values of the people. Consequently, the review of seminary formation and the existing nature of Christianity and traditional culture of the Igbos (Africans) became part of the observation that projected the fact that collaboration is lacking and needs to be consolidated among the agents of evangelization following our research project.

In our observational reflection also, we noticed that many of the Christian communities: dioceses, parishes, religious organizations of men and women, and seminary communities are still operating in the old ecclesial system. By its nature, it is “Pre-Vatican II” where those on top lord it over their subjects. With this background, we observed the actual challenges to Catholic collaboration that affect faith-commitment in Igboland of Nigeria and Africa in general under internal and external perspectives. The internal aspect included hierarchical structure of the Church (clericalism and institutionalism) that reflects a lack in the nature of priestly formation in the major seminaries. Externally, we also noticed that there are some influential challenges like governmental autocratic system of administration and different Christian denominations, sects, traditional religion and a poor practical spirit of collaboration with Catholic faith itself, etc.

Part two constitutes the interpretation that aimed at throwing more light to our problem of collaboration. In this part, we tried to respond to the questions posed on the first part, as it started our interpretation. To make a broadened reflection on this issue, we resorted to applying the following principles: use of social science theories that enlightened us more on collaboration, dialogue and inculturation that helped to show how people can relate and work together for a better result. In relation to evangelization, the interrelationship of these theories revealed a lot about how a Gospel message has to be preached through the cultural values of the people. This is where we tried to x-ray of African traditional religious world-view with particular emphasis on Igbo perception that enables us to treat collaboration, system of dynamism as it exists in the people’s life of

communalism. The aim was to see how the Igbo people lived their life before the advent of Christianity and colonialism.

As the problem has got to do with the nature of the early missionary evangelization, we tried to reveal their applied style that has to do with collaboration in administration and dialogue of the Gospel with the culture that receives it, etc. Moving further on this line, we presented a history of the theological tradition that has to do with clergy-laity relationship as it relates to the missionary nature of evangelization. Furthermore, we treated the teachings of the New Testament, the Council of Trent, the Vatican II, the *Magisterium* since the Vatican II, and the opinions of Pope John-Paul II and Elochukwu E. Uzukwu CSSp., one of the prominent Igbo theologians for pastoral enlightenment. In this exposition, we discovered that clergy-laity division or poor collaboration had its main historical origin with the Council of Trent. This Council laid great emphasis on the cultic hierarchical structure of the Church while, on the other hand, ignoring the universal priesthood of the believers. “This Council in many ways contributed to the widening of the gap between the clergy and the laity”¹. Vatican II improved on this by proposing the notion of common priesthood of the faithful that reiterated the role of the laity in the Church. But still, within our context, the Vatican II notion of *ecclesia*, especially administratively, remains a problem in reality.

The Church is compared to a loving mother who always cares and nourishes her children at her breast or more impersonally, to the boat of Peter, which carries the faithful to the farther shore of heaven, provided they remain on board. Suffice it to say that it is a “refectory where everybody is nourished from the life-giving streams of grace, which flows, especially through the Sacraments”² and communal loving relationship. Does the above image of our ecclesial analysis really show a clear representation of the Church of

1 K. Kunnumpuram, “*Beyond the Clergy-Laity Divide*”, 2000, pp. 1-11. In his article, K. Kunnumpuram, SJ, makes a strong plea for eliminating the clergy-laity divide as a way of expressing the newness of Christian praxis in the new millennium. Through a review of the historical process that led to the division as well as the teachings of the Second Vatican Council and the Post-Conciliar Magisterium, he shows how there has to be a change on the part of the hierarchy, leading to a participatory Church. (From the internet, no pagination).

2 A. Dulles, *Models of the Church*, (2nd Edition), Hong Kong, 1989, p. 41.

the mother's tenderness, the family of God? The basis for the spirit of collaboration as presented in our dissertation is the Igbo conception of "communalism" or "traditional Igbo family", the spirit of which agrees with Vatican II's notion of "*Koinonia*", or "Communion through inculturation" that has not been given a chance in our context. Igbo traditional society has been blessed with a family life that is essentially, spiritually oriented, disciplined, honest, hard-working, peace loving, and in short, endowed with a high sense of morality which in many respects, require to be Christianized³. The dissertation shows that the spirit of "common priesthood" will be incarnated meaningfully in the Nigerian culture through the traditional "Igbo family" system of "*umunna*" in communalism.

As the situation stands, we are not satisfied with the above Pre-Vatican Church. We need a change. This is where we presented a new model of ecclesia that is relevant to the cultural life of Igbos in particular, and Africans in general: inculturated African family ecclesia, (i.e *umunna* communal Church as a family of God). As Christianity is still foreign in its application within the cultural life of the Igbos as observed, *umunna* communal ecclesia suits well to them as it has to do with the lives and challenges of their extended family system. Igbo cultural system of family life becomes a fertilized model for active participation in the Church. In comparison with other existing models, the communal ecclesia showed its cultural advantage over other models the Church has had in history.

Part three, the intervention aspect of our dissertation, is concentrated on our response to the above questions that came from the interpretation. In this part, we presented the relevant pedagogy that is necessary to achieving our set up goal within the proposed Igbo new ecclesia. The challenge of our new ecclesia is the ability to maintain communal relationship among the agents of evangelization. Seminary formation house, as it were, should be a place of communion, functioning in mutual collaboration. The vocation of each of the faithful has to include personal and communitarian aspects that are inseparable from one another in relation to our general theme of *umunna community worship*. It responded well to the question: could there be a teaching, an enlightenment that can help the Igbos

3 Archbishop S.N. Ezeanya, The Traditional Igbo Family and the Christian Family, in Okoro, The Igbo Church and Quest for God. Nigeria: Pacific College Press Ltd., 1985, p. 54.

overcome the contradictions between the desire to be faithful to the sound customs and at the same time, be loyal to the Gospel Message? This is where inculturation throws more light to our topic of discussion. In the words of John Horgan: “The exploration of the idea of the Church as locally incarnated, and the need to disentangle it from this frame-work historically conditioned and juridical strands of argument, is all the more urgent a task”⁴. Horgan feels that the present epoch, the world “seems to be welcoming the concept of the Church as a living community, as quickly as it is rejecting the relevance of a Church which sets itself up as primarily a juridical society”⁵ As education is fundamental for the realization of our proposed model of ecclesia, we resorted to suggesting a modification in the present seminary formation in Igboland to accommodate our system of collaboration and formation for future agents of evangelization. This is followed with the presentation of a new system of collaboration among the agents of evangelization to be explored in the diocese, parish and the basic community levels. What is central here is that every function should be seen as service to the community of the faithful, who function with the spirit of love and mutual understanding. Knowing the problem of formation, we resorted to handle this by presenting theory experts in education and their processes, especially as they have to do with collaboration and cultural application in nature of transferability.

We also treated in details the laity active participation and the use of authority in the dioceses, parishes and in the seminary formation houses, which seem to be divorced of the Igbo cultural spirit of communalism and Vatican II’s conception of common priesthood including other magisterial teachings of ecclesial notion of authority as service and love. What could be the best cultural representation of this hierarchical and institutionalized practice that exists in Igbo Church today? In other words, what does collaboration mean in the communal relationship between the clergy and the laity and how relevant is this in the dynamic movement of the Igbo Church in Nigeria? Simply put, what does cooperation entail in the administrative powers of the Church between the laity and the clergy and how will this be applicable in our situation? We took time to handle the issue of clergy-laity collaboration in this phase of intervention. We did not limit our application here to the

4 J. Horgan, The Church Among the People, New York: Paulist Publication, 1969, p. 6.

5 *Ibid.*, p. 6.

cultural system of administration, which was handled extensively in the interpretation. We went further to approach the issue by presenting the required qualities of the bishops as shepherds of the local Igbo dioceses, their relationships with the priests and the laity respectively.

The fundamental aspect of this is the presentation of communal collaborative ministry – an ideal application of inculturation of Christian worship in the African /Igbo context as it involves the living and the dead. In view of collaboration, such topic as “towards an inculturated liturgy in Igboland” is treated to help us explore the good values of the culture to enrich the Gospel message. This includes “inculturated way of presiding over the liturgical sacraments”, need for “inculturated Catechism” that will be taught through the use of proverbs, oral teaching technique; we have also a review of naming ceremonies, other processes of inculturation that will be contextual and at the same time relevant to the liturgical practices.

The fourth part of our method is the prospective, whose main function is to project the kind of Church and world that could come out of our wishes as expressed in our proposals of intervention. As mentioned at the introduction, we are presenting it here along with the synthesis of all the afore-treated modalities of praxiology. As it were, it is situated close to the general conclusion of the thesis. We need to work as a group, as community and as family of brothers and sisters in Christ, which demands division of work that gives people the liberty and freedom to carry out their function. Gone are the days when the content of the faith is treated as a gnosis possessed only by a privileged few. We then reiterated the importance of collaborative work as a team, the essence of leadership role or management training for the use of authority, and etc. In short, the emphasis should be more on the new dynamism of pastoral activities in the light of the cultural life of the people. This is where we stressed more on the effective functions of the agents of evangelization, Bishops, priests and the laity from socio-cultural, religious and economic spheres of life. These will have to be realized through the committed activities of the agents of evangelization who should effectively collaborate in their pastoral work. This process includes an oriented new Christian cultural system of worship that involves a collaboration

of the visible and invisible realities. This is realized through liturgical services, pastoral sick-call visits, communal prayers that should touch the heart, cultural ways of teaching catechism, and etc, in the new proposed ecclesiology. Other practical ways presented here are formation through the use of people's cultural idioms and proverbs in catechesis, development of basic liturgical communities, etc. The detailed aspects of the prospective are treated in this last part of the conclusion that follows.

2. The presentation of the main points of the problem of collaboration

We tried in the above to present the synoptic nature of our work according to our praxiological method in view of the four perspectives used. In this second aspect, we will present the main key treated points in the light of the new model of ecclesiology, bearing in mind the last part of the method, the prospective. We are summarizing this under the following points: (1) Clergy-laity collaboration: use of power and authority in the new communal ecclesia (2) collaboration in the seminary formation, (3) dialogue between Christianity and culture, and (4) collaboration realized.

2.1 Clergy-laity collaboration: use of power and authority in the new communal ecclesia

From our discussions so far, we can see that one of the main reasons for lack of effective collaboration is the notion of dividing the Church in pyramidal pre-Conciliar structure of "superior/inferior subjects' syndrome" that challenges the nature of ecclesiology. It produces some lay people who are not well committed in the Church activities or are taken to other denominations and some priests who disagree with their Bishops and among themselves. It connotes "belittling" and "looking-down" on one another in some situations. This is mainly between the clergy and the laity (first class and second class citizens in God's ecclesiastical domain) within our context. This situation corresponds with the statement of Pope Pius X in 1909 where he maintained that "the Church is a society of unequal (made of two categories of persons, the pastors/clergy and

the laity)”⁶. The notion is that the Church in Igboland is still institutionalised, clericalized and cannot perform its mission without some stable organizational features that come from the hierarchy (clergy).

By institution as expressed above, we mean the internal organization of the local ecclesial community with its hierarchy, sacred powers, dogmas, traditions, rites, canons, and, etc that need to be inculturated. Actually, there is no doubt that it is by its nature of institution that every organization functions effectively by responding to the needs of the people through the maintenance of stability for specific identity. As we have in the Catholic Church, its ideal existence is for a purpose, to serve the people in good faith and helping them to gain their salvation. The argument is that no community can exist and operate effectively without some sort of institutionalisation that lends its unity, coherence, and identity⁷. In our observation, the outstanding problem is the nature of operation, the use of “power” or “authority” by some of our spiritual leaders. The religious institution, like every other one, does not exist for itself but in service to the community of faith – what it is earmarked for. It “involves following the same path as the historical transformation of the community itself that faces crises and discovers institutional responses to them”⁸. Nobody will raise eye-browse when people in authority play their role as expected of them, in consonant with the cultural live of the people and in the light of Christ’s teaching. But, there is trouble and consistent alarm when an institution turns out to be a means of threat and dehumanisation on those one is meant to lead and to serve whereby, authority turns out to be an exploitative and manipulative acts of power exhibition on others.

“The spirit that is part of every Christian life and of ordination is not just any spirit but the spirit of Christ. The Church, too, although it is the context within which the ordained are to work, is not the source of their vocation or their authority”⁹. All these came to be through the missionary activity of Christ, who empowered the apostles with the Holy

6 Pie X, 1909, Encyclique Vehementer, nos de 1906: Acts de S.S Pie X, Paris, ed. Des t.2; p. 133-135.

7 L. Boff, *Church: Charism and Power*, New York, Crossroad, 1984, p. 48.

8 *Ibid.*, p. 48.

9 J. Galot, *Theology of the Priesthood*, see Edward Schillebeeckx, *In Search of the Kingdom of God*, New York: Crossroad, 1983 in Daniel Donovan, *Op.cit.*, p. 76.

Spirit as he exercises his priestly and pastoral functions in the community. Granted that the Church is dynamic and is adapted to changing situations, however, its essential features must never be modified. The purpose of Christ's ecclesia is to build a community of faith and love that function in the spirit of collaboration and unity. It is wrong to limit Christian priesthood to narrowly cultic power imposition or to reduce it to a sociological mission devoid of its ontological perspective. Hence, in Christ, priesthood does not signify separation or power imposition as such "except for greater involvement"¹⁰. It has a dynamic quality that is ordered to the salvation of the world. Reflecting on the pastoral mission of the Church, we see Jesus as a good shepherd sent from God to gather and take care of his flock, which he committed himself to, knowing them individually by their names. This is where our present ecclesiology in Igboland needs more improvement. There is problem when the leaders of the Church fail to recognize the presence of their brothers and sisters, the laity, as members of the same family of God.

Moreover, as we are in the "third millennium, it is important that we discover new ways of dealing with power and authority in Igboland of Nigerian"¹¹. As God's children, integrative use of power here is more pertinent as it respects the personality and freedom of others who should be seen and treated as friends. The Church of Christ as designed by God is seen as a communion of people with one another, united in the body of Christ. The communion image here is the type that sees the Church as the people of God (Pet. 2:9), where cultural, personal distinctions, charismatic gifts or central ministries must not obscure or impede the fundamental unity relationship that is created. The members are united, one in equal partnership, they offer their aspirations to God as collaborative members of the same community. The Christian community is marked by a "sense of radical equality and shared dignity".¹² We are all brothers and sisters, children of a single Father. We exist under one authority, that of God and Christ. Jesus says, those who are great, those who by their nature or grace (or profession) have something to offer to others, are to put their gifts at the service of the community, (cf. Mt 23: 1-2). Authority, whether of

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.76.

¹¹ Etokudoh, "The Church's mission in Nigeria Beyond the year 2000 " in A. Njoku, *Op. cit.*, p. 29.

¹² D. Donovan Preparing For Worship, New York: Paulist Press, 1993, p. 191.

position or of talent, means service. Can there be any difference between worldly nation of “power” and the Church’s conception of authority as a service?

Institutions are meant to help the people maintain “permanent conversion” in their faith-commitment, which involves “fidelity of service” to the community and to the Lord. It presupposes “an interior attitude of detachment and poverty that allows the institution to abandon its search for glory in order to better serve the community and the Lord present within it”¹³. A community leader who is unwilling to treat others as colleagues and to share self-assessments and feelings with them cannot expect shared confidence in return. Without candid exchanges, crucial intelligence will be withheld, jeopardizing decision-making, and implementation efforts will result to tension-pack ¹⁴.

What chance is there for our model of ecclesia actualizing the rootness of the Gospel within the cultural life of the people, and, in its light, responding to the modern missionary challenges of the world of today, working in collaboration? As Africans, what challenges can be advanced in the freedom given to all nations by the Good news of Jesus Christ, a Gospel that lacks collaboration and predicts unquestionable power and authority that keeps people in captive, in the nature of sheepish obedience? What type of committed Christians do we expect to have under such an ecclesial movement where people are not free to express themselves or given a chance to participate effectively in mission activities? Simply put, the Church is dynamic and this helps it to progress with time.

This work presents the fact that the Church is dynamic. The dynamic and progressive nature of the Church makes her to be seasoned as it periodically reviews and renews her teachings with time. We presented how Vatican II, for example, improved on the teachings of Trent and Vatican I in the notion of ministry by putting forward for the present age a “ministerial collegiality” model of papal and episcopal authorities and “common priesthood” of the faithful who are expected to work in collaboration. All these

13 L. Boff, Church: Charism & Power – Liberation Theology and the Institutional Church, New York: Crossroad Publication, 1985, p. 48.

14 M. Fullan, (ed.), Education Leadership, Jossey-Bass Inc. Publications, 2000, p. 120.

are “based on the renewed theology of the Church” that is enshrined in the Council’s documents.

It is important that the Church in Igboland of Nigeria should aim at a commendable, credible and evangelical image of God’s relationship with humanity. We need to rise and stand on our feet as followers of Christ, in defending and piloting its affairs according to the mind of the founder. No commitment without active involvement and no one is an island. We need to improve more by working as a group, as a community and as a family of brothers and sisters in Christ. Gone are the days when the content of the faith is treated as a privilege of the few. The Church ought to be organized in such a way that all the members are drawn into the continuous process, thereby, growing in their faith-commitment. Anyone with a special experience or gifts to share even among small Christian groups, has to be encouraged to do so within his/her scope of implementation. Such a practice brings conversion and faith-commitment. It helps to maintain the faithful ecclesia that is communal oriented. The change will eventually follow, especially from some group of the laity and even the clergy who feel that they are only valued for making up the census of the Church and are required to listen and to obey.

In the light of the present day nature of mission, our proposal is to “shrink a little bit from the notion of the Church as a strict hierarchy to a more Synodal, collegial model whereby there are structures for the participation of membership in the ecclesiastical family processes, particularly in decision making processes as this touches all”¹⁵. This will help our ministry to have a human face instead of its “distant and Supra human” regard. It will be seen to hinge, like Jesus own ministry in the Gospels, on the quality of the relationship between the servant and the served. Through this process, we are gradually moving from a regimental system of administration that characterized the old ecclesia to a model of community of *umunna* family. Instead of being divided into two categories of the upper “class” who give orders, and the lower “class” who receives the order; we are moving

15 C.N. Etokudoh, “*The Church’s Mission in Nigeria Beyond the year 2000*” a paper presented at the bi-Annual meeting of the Association of Nigerian Priest in Belgium on the 24th April 1998, published in A. Njoku (ed.), *The Holy Spirit Lectures*, Leuven: Press, vol. 1, 1999, p. 21.

toward the realization that we all need to do both of those things¹⁶. Here, our concentration is on Church that is a theological entity and not on a sociological type where a group of few can consider themselves to be ecclesia. We are talking about theological ecclesia reflected in the image of Christ's intention and realized in the community of those who believe in him and are united in his name.

In our position of authorities, let us make an effort to allow the Holy Spirit a chance in our lives through constant life of discernment, contemplation and prayer. To be in authority is not easy, but with simplicity of heart, prayer, prudence, dialogue and love, one will always do well. Leadership role is a problem that faces every institution, secular or religious, as far as it is a human organization. What is important is to face the real time and for leaders to cultivate the humility to learn from one another the best practices. It is believed that authorities are trusted to those whom the community feels that they are worthy and will exercise their functions well for the common good. Our authorities should endeavour to guide against unnecessary psychological self-defective image and manifestations of inadequacy in their spiritual formation. They need to update their sense of theological teaching by constant reading of encyclicals and relevant Church official documents, and too, by engaging themselves on periodical seminars and conferences. It is important to note here that adequate theological education is necessary for our would-be leaders of tomorrow by ensuring the use of proper models and structures of administration in the light of the local culture and after the mind of the mother Church.

It is one thing to be learned, and another thing to know how to apply one's education profitably and selflessly. There is need to match one's knowledge, words and actions together. Information, consultation and sharing in decision-making and constant evaluation of the process help a lot in contributing to the building up of a community, and a change from the notion of being used to a sense of joint enterprise. Sharing of functions does not lessen one's authority, but rather enhances it. We need to develop a sense of teamwork, sharing of responsibility and ideas among the laity and clergy for effective progress in the Church's activities. To develop this spirit of sharing, we need a different

16 E. Flood, The Laity Today & Tomorrow, New York: Paulist Press, 1987, p. 43.

style of leadership – humble, more open-minded, enabling rather than autocratic, appealing through competence rather than status¹⁷. Igbo people need this type of leadership that inspires a universal sense of belonging, of being valued and of contributing to the common good through justice and peace. In the words of John F.X. Harriott:

To inspire effectively, to persuade effectively, to lead effectively, it needs to study the state of the art and to respond to the mentality of each successive age. And it is here that the mismatch frequently occurs between the way in which it communicates and the receptivity of those to whom its message is addressed. The issue is not the nature of the Church or the source of its authority or the claims it is justified in making. It is what engages attention, actually persuades and actually motivates action, in a particular cultural context. To refuse to face this is not faith but self-indulgence. There is no point in reiterating that 'Father knows best'. 'Do as father tells you' in a society that can no longer take in that kind of instruction¹⁸.

The life of the Igbo people is a life of collaboration and this has to be discovered in its culture through the help of our spiritual leaders as pointed out by John Harriot. If we desire to form a Church that is communal oriented and after the teachings of Vatican II and the magisterial encyclicals on clergy-laity relationship; if we want to build a Church that is truly family of God, which is the fundamental option of the African extended family system, then, we must be ready to change our vision of authority and seek one that will aim at collaborating mutually with men and women of our communities.

2.2 Collaboration in the seminary formation

Following our description and analysis in the first two chapters of our work, we noticed that those in formation (both men and women) were taught to obey and to depend on the higher authority; they were not encouraged to question or to take certain initiatives in order to take their places as mature sons and daughters in the household of faith. Formation was something they received, not a process of growth to which they committed themselves in order to be responsible for the life and mission of the Church, each according to his particular state and gifts. It is well known that education and formation can be used to tame and domesticate people or to liberate them. If one looks at the current

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 310.

¹⁸ J. Harriott, quoted in E. Flood, *Ibid.*, p. 311.

Church institutions in our contextual regions that are engaged in formation of agents of evangelization, it is difficult not to conclude that in quite a number of them, education is primarily aimed at domestication. I do not exclude our seminaries and convents. A formation for a Church that is family/communion, in which the central concept and agent is the Holy Spirit, who gives gifts to each one for the building of the body of the Church, must be a formation that liberates¹⁹. The morality here is to see to it that within the existing interaction in this system, the use of power must be one that empowers, protects and enhances the dignity of others who are also members of God's ecclesial family. What it means is that in the moral criterion for the right use of power, authority as much as possible has to be shifted from power domineering to the liberating process. Power is used rightly when it enables the other to become increasingly free from coercion or bondage. St. Paul insists that "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom" (2 Cor. 3:17). I think it can also be said that where there is no freedom, there the Spirit of the Lord is not present, at least in the structures.

If we desire to form a Church that is communal; if we want to build a Church that is family oriented after the extended family of communalism, then we must change our model of formation and seek one that will aim in the first place at forming men and women who are maturely free, in whom the Gospel has been interiorized and who can communicate and collaborate freely. There is, I think, little doubt that the formation we have given to agents of evangelization in the past has been largely intellectual. Now, we must provide a formation that is experiential and contextual. Experience will be able to generate the personal convictions necessary to be a follower of Christ in a world so influenced and formed by a global secular culture. By contextual here we mean the sense that this model of formation for the Church ought to reflect Igbo family/communal system and its existential problems; not just too much on intellectual accent, but with human and spiritual experiences. The person will be helped in the first place to know him/herself and what it means to be a human person²⁰ and a cultural member.

19 C. MacGarry, "Formation of the Agents of Evangelization For the Realities of Africa Today: Its Urgency and Important" in *AFER*, Aug./Oct./Dec., 1999, pp. 195-209.

20 *Ibid.*, p. 209.

As we earlier observed, the nature of our seminary training is much of “theoretical” and “speculative”. Okoro sees the approach as “ready-made material”, theoretically oriented and slow to changes, whereby one is expected to study and reproduce during exams, fundamental theology, morals, canon law, dogma, etc., all with foreign orientation and background, divorced of practical cultural problems of the local society. This type of training leaves the priest almost helpless when he is confronted with existential socio-cultural problems in the society like reverence to ancestors, communal and collaborative services, “*Ozo*” title, “re-incarnation”, demonic possession, witchcraft, etc.

As a characteristic deficiency of the authoritarian style of teaching, the teacher is the “know-all”. Learners are expected to accept everything he presents, without much challenges, and are equally, expected to regurgitate these closed-bodies of knowledge in the examinations. This method of “summative” evaluation as opposed to “formative progression” is popularly known among the students as “back to sender”. Consequently, there exists a problem in this type of study, as the learners in the seminary institutions in Igboland are not adequately prepared culturally, for the challenges of the contemporary society. One problem in this regard is because the style of teaching and learning does not give seminarians enough time to take the initiative for private and independent inquiries into the problems of the changing world and the society around them, as is the case in the traditional education. In the Igbo traditional nature of education, one learns by doing which involves a lot of personal input during one’s private practice. Therefore, balanced approaches to educational socialization demands that students be encouraged and motivated to learn more through self-initiatives, as well as exploring the use of modern facilities available for formation and research relevant to their society.

Seminary teaching methods, therefore, call for a complete overhaul in order to integrate the dynamic demands of the society for which its graduates are trained to serve. The quality of such graduates should reflect the relevance of societal needs for which they are being trained. This means that they will be trained to have the competence in problem solving ability, pastoral skills and ability to deal with pressure of intense needs of the society. Through this way, the act of caring and nurturing with an aim to achieve

inculturation will become more easily and effectively implemented. Moreover, a priest in training and formation needs to be Africanized and this is possibly realized through a strategic methodology where inculturation is premium in the major seminaries (philosophy and theology, respectively). Undoubtedly, these teething problems call for an urgent attention for reorientation in seminary teaching. Seminary should be a place of caring. Authorities should learn how to take care of those entrusted to them to form. This means that effort should be made to understand them and their psychological moods as to determine when they are happy or not. There is also need to understand and to respond to their social, economic and spiritual needs and if possible, knowledge of their family backgrounds as to understand them, their worries and their actions well.

However, academic curriculum in the new ecclesial family must be technically relevant, appropriate to its purpose, and theoretically sophisticated enough to embrace many disciplines including computer technology, accounting and psychology to the real philosophical and theological courses. The evolution of the system as an organization has to reveal sense of ingenuity, capacity, and willingness to reinvent dynamic relevant structure for its purposeful end. The style of teaching must not be domineering or hyper authoritative but friendly, collaboratively and democratically oriented with a focus on teaching and learning, and on the objective and recognition of the intrinsic worth of each individual student. Incentives and motivations must be encouraged and they must be made to understand that people care for them and that they are human beings who deserve their dignities and respect.

It is important to bear in mind that seminary training has an objective aim, which is realizable through the spirit of collaboration of the professors and the students. The application of collaboration helps individuals who are working together toward a common goal in relationships that are mutually empowering, respectful, responsive and fruitful. This involves the spirit of free expression and mutual communication system in the classroom and within the seminary environment. Communication provides the multiple avenues for students to provide input into and receive information on issues and decisions that affect them. Some of their research programmes have to be carried out as a group to reflect a

democratic representation of Igbo family as against autocracy that prevails. They should be trained to function in unity as a team by developing the spirit of trust and love among them.

Other required qualities are the spirit of flexibility, life-inclusiveness and acknowledgement of differences in character. The spirit of flexibility entails the capacity to anticipate and adapt to periodical changes in curriculum and the circumstance surrounding the studies. By inclusive, I mean the ability to provide the necessary opportunities for all to engage meaningfully in the challenging seminary life environment. The training has to be all-inclusive in its orientation. This involves the recognition of values, talents and differences in individuals and cultures, which have to influence the nature of the communal life and the learning skill. Learning-centred, here, involves the continuous improvement through proactive practice and reflection of what is taught and learnt. Learning-centred governance recognizes the primacy of student and the quality of their final formation in relation to the cultural environment they will minister to later.

Seminarians are meant to be accompanied in “spiritual, human, cultural, cognitive, social, effective, intrapsychic and interpersonal aspects”. Human formation is necessary as it takes care of subconscious motivation, a sense of maturity in action and in relationship with others, “emotional stability such as aggression and urge for sexual gratification”, ability to distinguish between the “ideal self” and the “actual self”, self-acceptance and a call for individual formation (i.e. personality assessment). The students must be trained to appreciate themselves, others and their cultures. This is important as they would be exposed to work with people later and to the “available inculturation materials and challenged to be creative by making their own adaptations to the concrete contexts where they would be working”²¹. More importantly, they need to be trained to have a good image of public relationship, as they would work in the midst of people of various cultures, hence, a vision of the spirit of socialization is paramount in their system of formation as well.

21 *Ibid.*, p. 209.

The dynamism required in this type of formation includes education, (especially towards self-knowledge and self-actualization), formation (knowing and identifying with Christ and maintaining good relationship with the people), accompaniment (entails life of sharing, good model of life exemplary, spirit of dialogue etc., being exhibited by the formators) as reflected in the above-indicated model. In short, “integral formation should cover the person’s whole life span (the past, the present and the future)”²².

To be successful in our seminary formation, pedagogy must have a clear goal objective. Moreover, it has to be imbued with high expectations, elicit motivation, and encourage learners to take the responsibility of their own learning through vast reading and self-evaluation. It must be technically competent and appropriate to its purpose and theoretically sophisticated to embrace many disciplines that could be realized practically. Moreover, the seminarians must particularly have the spirit of transferability of knowledge which should be their watch-dog, as this will make it possible for them to apply what they have learned in any given cultural environment. What it involves is the ability to synthesis cultural values through the meaningful use of inculturation, collaboration and dialogue in communication as they maintain the spirit of communalism.

2.3. Dialogue between Christianity and the people’s culture

From what we have discussed so far, it is a truism that no human community in this world however isolated it may be, can be said to be totally pure from external influences. Every cultural tradition absorbs elements that come across it by other cultural influences and often gets renovated by the stimulus of such experiences. By the nature of the Church, it is meant to take human cultures seriously; hence, as explained above, it has to form part of courses that should be taking seriously in the houses of formation. This was a message at the 1977 Synod by Cardinal Otunga of Nairobi: “Take us seriously and help us to take ourselves seriously”.²³ Faith necessarily uses the resources of human culture, even if it is distinct from it. The Second Vatican Council speaks of faith as “entering into communion

²² *Ibid.*, p. 209.

²³ Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 58.

with different forms of cultures”²⁴ and its emphasis on the proclamation of Good News, which is not just tied to any one form of culture or way of life. What is important is that the gospel must impregnate the culture and the whole way of life of man ²⁵ and its mission must always consider a human person as its focal point.

As previously treated, the word of God does not come in a vacuum. It is addressed to people who have cultural world-view, ritual and social structures of their own. This culture embodies already a first, founding revelation of the word in the creation both of the cosmos and of human beings. Thus, the “Word” culturally took flesh and manifested the power of God on earth as a saviour of all peoples of cultures (cf. John 1:1). The bible by its nature is seen as the outcome of a process of inculturation. This means that the word of God, for it to take root, must be always inculturated, meaning that it has to be concretely oriented to the life of the people within their cultural world-view. The world-view here stands for a guide to life and actions. It is complemented by a system of values that indicate certain norms that govern life and points to goals to be pursued²⁶.

Following the contemporary worldview of incarnation and appropriation of the “Good News”, each continent tries to maintain a theology proper to its culture like the Asian, Latin American, etc. In the African context, many theologians have written, adopting the possible concepts for this task of deepening the message through a reflection of “proper African theology. This must be proper African way of administration and working together” that will be relevant to its culture and to the life of the people. In the light of the divergent theological inputs on issues that concern faith in the African concept, her theologians have reflected all possible explorative avenues (like incarnation, inculturation, liberation, reconstruction and prophetic theology), to present the image of Christ to the misery cultures of Africa and to welcome him as one of them, preferably, as their *elder brother*, who intervenes for the good of everybody.

The fact is that the African theology *per se* has a philosophical and socio-anthropological approach to collaboration, which is focused on the relevance of

24 Vat. II, *Ibid.* p. 50.

25 Vat. II, *Ibid.*, p. 50.

26 Amaladoss, Inculturation as practiced in India, Rome: Dharmaram Publications, Bangalore, 1992, p. 22.

Christianity to the religious cultures of African people. The philosophical approach to inculturation is so called because it is built on philosophical system or model with which to elaborate African theology. This can help us to see the close relationship of collaboration and inculturation. Placid Tempels²⁷ sets the stage for it in his Bantu philosophy, which was meant to be a handmaid for developing African theology. Many African Catholic theologians followed this approach today, to be concerned not just with communication, but also with re-interpretation of the Christian message from the cultural African perspective to reflect African system of collaboration. Socio-anthropological method of approach helps to look at culture in terms of world-views. This involves a dialogue with traditional African religious culture, to identify religio-cultural categories to be used in interpreting the Christian life of collaboration, life of communalism (as presented in the Igbo life characteristics above). This is the type of system that involves dialogue of Christian culture and the religious aspects of Igbo Christian life in the current view of African theology. The understanding of this process helps to promote the communal spirit of collaboration in the context.

For instance, among the African Churches today (both those controlled by the Africans and those manned by the expertise), the “African Christianities”, as they are popularly called, are more vibrant than the normal traditional system controlled by the missionaries. One may like to know why? The answer is that these indigenous Churches “arouse more participants and generate more fulfilment among the members...these Churches tune into the dimension of spirit, which is vital to the African notion of person”²⁸. Uzukwu, as a liturgist, presented the gesture well when he stated that “The ‘in’ of the Spirit of God, who makes his home in the community and in each individual Christian, is also the ‘opening out’ of the spirit of the community and of individuals to creativity”²⁹. He demonstrated this with the two gestures of prayer as observed in the Church today. The first one is the Church’s traditional style that has prevailed since the twelfth century and which involves “folding one’s hands and placing them on one’s breast” indicates not only “personal and interior prayer”, but also “individual and private orientation of religious practice”. By implication, this practice is “opposed to the second aspect, the communal opening out of the *orans* pattern (arms outstretched) – ‘opening out’, ‘leaving one’s flanks

27 Cf. Placid Tempels quoted by Justin S. Ukpong, “Towards A Renewed Approach to Inculturation Theology”, in *Journal of Inculturation Theology*, (Vol. 1, No 1), Nigeria, Port Harcourt: CIWA Press, April 1994.

28 E.E. Uzukwu, *A listening Church – autonomy and communion in African Churches*, Maryknoll, New York, 1996, p. 109.

29 *Ibid.*, p. 109.

open,' 'getting hurt,' 'warmth of love,' and so on.³⁰ The cultural gesture type manifests the spirit of communalism caring, self-effacing and accommodative while the Church's traditional style demonstrates selfishness; just for oneself and no more.

In our communal spirit of *umunna*, the gesture of outstretched arms symbolizes solidarity, love, care, oneness, open-mindedness, spirit of bearing and collaborating with others; in short, it should demonstrate intimacy within the Church-family of God. As the gesture manifests one's heart, it demonstrates the fact that Igbo community is not only of the "head" but essentially and more profoundly, of the "heart". Igbo worship is holistic, wrapped in "body language and its ecclesiology is supposed to draw "both the Church-community and individual Christian members into greater intimacy with the Lord-Spirit"³¹. Through inculturation, the Igbo family ecclesia will move each believer to a dynamic and healthy relationship with the Trinity vertically, and with the community of faith, horizontally.

However, the focal point of this dissertation as expressed above is on the ultimate goal of the application of inculturation within the frame work of communalism, bearing in mind the challenges of Christianity in Igboland in particular: to establish a collaboration among the agents of evangelization and a healthy dialogue between the Gospel message and the culture of the people for the development of authentic Christianity. By inviting the local Churches in Igboland to believe and practise faithfully their commitment in the Good News, the aim should not be to them, from their culture or from the truths containing the religion to which they adhered before and which are expressed in terms of their own culture, rather by asking them to believe in the Gospel, we are asking them to contribute to Christianity, from the riches of their own religions and cultural traditions. In other words, evangelization and conversion presuppose the continuance of an inter-faith dialogue as part of the inculturation process³². From our discussions above, we can deduce that the primary objective of inculturation is not a foreign missionary (which is at the level of implantation), but the concrete Christian communities that are called to work in collaboration, which is the living growing Church³³, working together in the spirit of love and understanding.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

^{32A} Shorter, *Towards a Theology of Inculturation*, New York, Orbis Books, 1992, p.100.

³³ Cf. L.J. Luzbetak., *The Church and Cultures*, Techny, 1963, p. 341.

2.4. Collaboration realized

As our connecting principal term is collaboration within the new ecclesia, every other aspect of its treatment will come under this place including its prospects. We have actually seen that our new ecclesia will be more effective when the agents of evangelization choose to work in harmony with all the members. For a clarity of purpose, we have chosen to treat the following under collaboration in view of our summary: (1) collaboration implied, (2) collaboration & African family ecclesia, (3), collaboration & communication.

2.4.1 Collaboration implied

Collaboration, as earlier defined in our theory shows the ability of the Bishops to work co-operatively with the priests and the laity, participating in common objectives. When ministry is shared in communion with the charisma of the members, all the participants will be actively involved in the realization of God's kingdom on earth, as long as there is trust and a positive spirit of collaboration among them. This involves working in harmony and associating freely without the spirit of exploitation and scorn, but rather with respect for human dignity and for the love of God. Working in collaboration means living in alliance, in good relationship, irrespective of status, clergy or laity, tribe, culture, spirituality or personality differences. Being in alliance is contrary to living a life of "isolationism" or "individualism", "totalitarianism", "absolutism" or "dominationalism", or that which gives vent to autocratic administration. Rather, the spirit of alliance or collaboration calls for a life of "community sharing", (working together) a mutual and fraternal relationship in terms of unity, understanding and love among the members.

It is also important to remember that the fundamental reason for the collaboration of laity-clergy in the Church as we are proposing is for effective realization of God's project through the involvement of all groups that make up the people of God. However, in some circumstances, there are glaring factors underlying the urgent demand for this co-operation. In Europe, North America or India, for instance, the argument for laity-clergy collaboration is in order that the laity continues the work which the clergy/religious have started. The argument in Europe and North America in this modern time has been that the institution of

the Church is, in many parts of the world, in crisis due to the lack of ministers ordained through the sacrament of orders. Without these ministers, communities of faith are left to themselves, and run the risk of falling apart and disappearing. Thus, there is need to show continuity of activity. In our context, the reason for this collaborative participation is not necessarily due to lack of priests, but for the fact that the Church belongs to the two groups, whose roles ought to be recognized by each party. The aim therefore is to encourage and to reactivate the potential prowess of the lay people in management, in collaboration, in response to their working closely with the clergy. This is seen as participatory management. Through this aspect, the laity will come to be actively involved in the new family ecclesia, as some of them are professionals in some areas of management even better than many of us, the priests, claim to know, like accounts, lawyers, engineers, etc.

Although, there is an underlying assumption that such a committed management could generate conflict in some parishes between the laity and the parish priests, who may feel threatened and uncomfortable for such a compromise. Yet, there are some in the Church, especially the clergy, or people with institutional power who want to take the laity into “confidence”, by involving them in some of the decision making because the latter is becoming vociferous, assertive and demanding with reference to Vatican II empowerment. Moreover, the new mission of God is no longer seen as “Father’s Church”, or Father’s Project”, but as belonging to the people of God, which should involve the clergy and the laity respectively. The fact is that the lay members have awakened and are learned enough now on matters concerning the Church and their civic responsibilities, hence, including them in the governance and management of the Church will even help to avoid conflict and clashes and rather gain them their unalloyed support in the family ecclesia.

The underlying assumption in this new ecclesia is that it will be in the interest of the clergy that the laity’s demands are satisfied to an extent, to ensure the continued commitment of the laity in the Church, (i.e. the Church as defined and perpetuated by the clergy or hierarchy syndrome). As it is observed, the model of institutionalism does not see the lay people as partners and co-custodians of the mission and co-workers in carrying out the activities of the Church.

Nevertheless, in the African Synod, the Fathers realized and acknowledged that in the past, injustice had been done to the laity over the years and something needs to be done. This is the acknowledgement that a few members of the clergy, over the years, have enjoyed power and responsibility in the governance and management of the Church as an institution, in a religious organization, hence, their cry for a change of vision and new outlook in Church's affairs where the position of the laity should be improved. Dabhi writes: 'it is a painful realization that some sections have monopolised the Church, which is supposed to be the Church of the people of God. On the other hand, the majority of the people of God have systematically, and with doctrine sanction and justification, been kept out of the decision making process in the life of the Church (which includes various aspects of the Church such as the spiritual, sacramental life, managing various Church institutions, activities, finance and human resources)³⁴. Perhaps, what is involved here is an effort to establish a new relationship of equality and justice where laity and clergy are neither superior nor inferior to each other as human beings and in the eyes of God. Thus, laity-clergy collaboration will then mean a restoration of justice and reconciliation for mistakes committed in the past. First, we are generally human beings before we begin to think of our professions and vocations.

The underlying assumption behind such an understanding is the awareness that the Church is the property of Christ handed over to the people; it belongs to them. People are the core and centre of life in the Church. Church exists for the people and by the people. To build and sustain the Church entails people's responsibility. But this can only be effective when people feel that they belong to the Church, and that the Church is theirs as much as the clergy. They do not only have responsibility for the Church, but also the authority to carry out the responsibilities. If this elastic attitude is established among the laity and clergy, it does not matter if the clergy, by the virtue of their profession, takes the lead.

As we saw above, under highest level of administration, we have the bishop who, under the Holy See, is responsible for all the temporalities of the Church within the diocese. In the propagation of these temporal affairs of the Church, the bishop is usually

34 Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 13.

assisted by a board of advisers/diocesan Council, (composed of clerical and lay experts in various fields)³⁵ or senate (composed mainly of priests). After the bishop, we have the priest, the immediate leader of the parish. Like the bishop, the priest should pay more attention to cultic and Sacramental functions, and supervisions of parish activities on spiritual areas and allow the laity to be concerned with the temporalities and other possible administrative activities. O'Connell notes:

Unfortunately today, particularly, in large urban parishes, the priest is besieged by so many problems of administration and finance that he can scarcely find time for the performance of his proper-priestly duties. Even a fair-sized Catholic parish in the United States is a pretty big business. Establishing and maintaining such a plan involves: the selection and purchase of the property, the building of Church, school, rectory and convent, besides other buildings which may be needed in a particular set-up, such as high school, gymnasium, parish hall, etc. The cost of such buildings will at times amount literally to millions of dollars³⁶.

O'Connell visualizes a great distraction a priest will encounter if he tries to do all the Church work by himself alone without effective collaboration from the faithful who are also members of Christ's body, the Church. He will find it difficult to be honest to his ministerial functions (celebrating of the sacraments) if he is to be responsible for all these: buildings or repairs, painting, plumbing, supervision of janitor, fireman, sacristan, housekeeper, etc. There is no doubt that the purchase of supplies and equipment for Church, school, recreation programmes and the maintenance of orderliness in the parish require a lot of planning and bookkeeping. Where then is the priest to find the time to get to know people he is serving, to visit the sick, to counsel those in trouble, to take up census, to search out fallen-away Christians, to give convert instructions, to serve on various ecclesiastical and civic commissions, to teach catechism, to prepare his sermons and to pay attention to his own physical, intellectual and spiritual welfare?³⁷

This presentation of O'Connell resembles the nature of the problem that confronted the early apostles of the Church, following the complaint of the widows who were being

35 Hugh J. O'Connell, H.J. O'Connell (ed) Putting Vatican II into Practice, Catholic Living Series, Vol. 7, Liguori: Redemptorist Fathers' Press, 1966, p. 109.

36 *Ibid.*, p. 108.

37 *Ibid.*, p. 108.

neglected in the daily distribution of food. The apostles, knowing their role as the propagators of faith, through prayer and ministry of the word, resorted to appoint seven deacons, “men of good reputation” full of the spirit and of wisdom to be in charge of works (Cf. Acts 6:1). A solution of the same nature is required for our parish administration and finance today in our new proposed ecclesia. After all, the parish finance belongs to the corporate entity of the parish. The response to the question posed above must be resolved by the assumption of greater responsibility on the part of the laity in our new African-family-Church as will be practised in Igboland in particular. Moreover, it is the desire of the teaching of the Vatican II that the laymen and laywomen assist the pastor and assume a measure of responsibility for the financial administration of the parish³⁸. So what we are presenting here is not from the blue, but enshrined in the teaching of the Church, which has been neglected by many of our local authorities. In an assumption of this function, it is important to remind the laity what it involves to be co-responsible because, in some parishes, some of them treat parish properties anyhow as if they do not belong to them directly as individual member of the Church, since they know that they are marginalized – meaning that they see these objects as parish priest’s property. This does not depict the spirit of commitment or co-responsibility that holds everybody in check.

2.4.2 Collaboration and communal ecclesia

Having seen the model of collaboration as it involves the agents of evangelization, it is imperative that the Igbo community in particular and Africans in general will have to integrate the system within their style of communalism. What it means is that the Church should live in symbiotic relationship with the traditional family system. Due to modernism, capitalist development and globalisation, there have been cases of increase in divorce and separation where the husband is forced to work in urban centres, far away from the family, whereby, the institution of the family is being threatened. There are cases of political instability, selfishness, corruption, intolerance, rampart crimes among the youths, especially in urban areas, etc. We share the opinion of Judith Mbula Bahemuka who holds the view that the Church should embark on serious catechesis to restore vitality to the

38 *Ibid.*, p. 110.

family³⁹ and act as the conscience of the society through its prophetic role as an animator and heart of the society. However, the point here is not only to restore the vitality of the family at the level of conscience but also to assist at the level of the economic change in order that the families could live in a viable communal context with relaxed minds.

Church takes care of this by resting on the firm foundation of the cultural values of *umunna* community living, sharing and caring for one another in the extended family system that entails a lot of responsibility. As it were, the family feeds in the rich values and nourishment of the Church, while the Church in turn, is enriched by the local family model of life of live and let live community, collaborative function, dialogue, promotion of relationship of warmth acceptance and encouragement of one another.

In view of the proliferation of religions at all quarters of the continent, it has been alleged that “religion has become a disease in Africa”⁴⁰, indicating that it has constituted an obstacle to the economic development of the continent. Some have it that since the time of slavery till now, “the African religious vision of the world substitutes escapism for facing the social, political, and economical challenges of the continent”⁴¹. This means that religious Catholic members must be committed to make the leaven of society possible to enable them to transmit the light of the Gospel into the economic, social and political realities of the society for a change. Today, we can see that the world is divided. “This division concerns various sectors and has various origins. Unfortunately, there are also divisions in the Church, the mystical Body of Christ and the universal sacrament of salvation as demonstrated above. This is a growing consciousness that division veils the gaze toward the future”⁴² if left unchecked. Overcoming the divisions that exist both in the Church and in the world today, offers a special change of hope in the life of humanity in Africa or Igboland. The Church must not remain divided or fragmented and at the same

39 Cf. Judith Mbula Bahemuka, “*Formation of the Laity as the agents of Evangelization for the Church as Family of God*”, in *AFER* by AMECEA Gaba Publications, Kenya. August/October/December, 1999, vol. 41, Num. 4, 5 & 6.

40 *Ibid.*, p. 26.

41 *Ibid.*, p. 26.

42 Cf. Cardinal V. Puljic, (Archbishop of Vrhborna, Bosnia-Herzegovina), “*Division And Dialogue*” in *L’Osservatore Romano*, N. 42, 17th October, 2001.

time, addressed as one, holy, Catholic and apostolic. While it is the task of Christian families to bring the heart of this extended family ecclesia into witness - a witness that transforms from inside our vision of the world, being inspired by the spirit of the beatitudes, challenge the various tasks of the society; the Holy Spirit task at its depths will be the bond of communion⁴³.

This is why the Church is called to be in communion with and remain united on the local as well as on the universal level, being well co-ordinated by the Bishops of the dioceses. Our sincere desire is to improve and perfect the movements towards a truly collaborative Church where all sections of the people of God, revitalizing their baptismal grace, would fulfil their vocation and mission in the spirit of unity and love. This model will then be a body that gives witness to unity in mission, achieved with a diversity of roles and charisms. This is where we emphasize the importance of involving all sections of the Church, especially the laity, by reposing greater confidence in them, in order to bring about a mature and participatory Church that is modelled after the trinitarian doctrine. The responsibility of the Bishops, priests and laity in relationship to the universal Church counts as one of the trinitarian forms of expression of unity within diversity. This involves promoting the faith and common tradition, collaboration under co-responsibility in the fields of missionary activity, of inculturation of the gospel and the cultural dialogue, in the promotion of humanity as in the defence of peace and justice at all aspects of the society.

2.4.3 Collaboration and communication

As we observed earlier, one of the problems confronting the Igbo Church today is poor interpersonal communication and unhealthy rivalry that exists among the clergy and between them and the laity which at times, results to creating a gap or distancing oneself from the others. Unfortunately, as it sounds, these are people called to teach and lay good exemplary lives in the society. This calls for urgent eschatological vision of the future

43 Cf M. Brown (ed.), *The African Synod, Documents, Reflections, and Perspectives*, New York: Maryknoll, Orbis Books, 1996, Message, Nos 20 & 27.

ecclesia and need for good relationship realizable through mutual communication among all existing sectors of life.

Communication is part of nature and it involves common experience and mutual influence. Inter-communication tries to present the “*holistic*” nature of relationship from the point of view of *horizontal* (between man to man) and of *vertical* (between man and God, based on the trinity) theological dimensions. In a socio-anthropological dimension, communication reflects in all aspects of human life: scientific, social, political, linguistic, semiotic, juristic and religious, etc. As missionaries in our land, the preoccupation of pastors should be how the Good News is to be communicated or the style of language to be employed, so that it would be accepted and will be effectively propagated in our culture. How would it help to strengthen the relationship of the people in their challenging life situations?

The originality of the faith of unity among the Christians is the communication of the trinitarian love: according to St. Ignatius, God is “*Aimé*”, Christ is “*l’Amour*” and the Holy Spirit is “*l’Amant*”. The response of man to the gratuitous gift of God, gift of creation and the incarnation of Christ, should be one of unalloyed commitment to faith through mutual relationship and a liberal spirit of communication. This love of God which is realized in the “Apostles Creed” (*Credo*) ought to be the unifying force that guides the faithful in their relationship with others. This symbol of the apostle’s creed is manifested in tripled structural Persons: *trinitarian (Father, Son and the Holy Spirit)*, a narrative and a belief in one God/Church, which, as it were, should be a unifying factor for all the children of God. When the atmosphere of love, solidarity and spirit of co-operation sets in, the lay people will be happy to take up their legitimate functions in the ecclesiastic service; and there will be an effective sense of collaboration.

There is the need to respond to the present day nature of being Church in terms of communal ecclesia. This involves using the necessary existing opportunities available to educate our seminarians, particularly, on human relationship, African values, respect for elders and shared vision of life within a community of God’s family. In turn, elderly priests

should learn how to respect the younger ones who work with them in parishes. Generally, emphasis should be made on a balanced educational growth: morally, socially, culturally, physically and spiritually. It is our hope that if students are trained to be themselves, they will become future “living stones” and their formation in the seminary will help them to respond to the immense challenges of pastoral activities in the ecclesial family of God at all levels.

Therefore, effort should be made to promulgate a consensus commitment of all and sundry on the essential inculturated ventures which will promote missionary evangelization that is typical of Igbo local Church. To achieve this, all those involved, including the personnel responsible for decision taking and the entire pastoral workers, must be made to understand very clearly the communal statement of their collaboration, the aims and objectives of the activities. Every effort should gear toward supporting unanimously, the set up goal and to promote the necessary programmes that will help for Christian growth and maturity among the pastoral workers. There is need for an on-going formation of all the agents of evangelization, especially, those committed to pastoral activities. This will include training opportunities for our laity members who are working in dioceses and parishes respectively. They need to know the teachings of the Church and their rights and responsibilities. For the pastors, it will help them to be current in the teaching of the Church.

Collaboration, as we saw in the theory, is diverse: it involves opinions, characters, skilled and unskilled, divisions of activities, good leadership, and etc. Occasionally, its application in some situations leads to conflict among the members – this is part of life and should not be seen as an anomaly. In view of this, we need to have trained or experienced members who will be able to handle conflicts when they arise within parishes and basic communities. This may mean that leadership role should be part of the seminary programme of studies as it will help our pastoral leaders to be seasoned in their pastoral functions that require effective communications at all levels.

Effort should also be made to recognize the lay people who are specialist in leadership role to handle certain functions that suit their profession, like accountants, religious directors, etc as earlier presented. Nothing prevents recognizing these good qualities among the laity. This will make it possible to look for and to work with other lay professionals whose expertise is needed in the same venture for the achievement of a set-goal, pastorally. Hence, the acceptance of varieties in skills paves way for effective collaborative ministry among the agents of evangelization.

3. Final reflections and some recommendations

To work as a team is a powerful medicine for understanding love and better achievement through collaboration. In unity, a group can move beyond support to act for a common purpose. When experiences are melted together, people freely understand their line of action whether they are on the right track or not. The energy can lead the group to organize themselves to do something for a common purpose.

The Igbo sense of *umunnarism* has always been a uniting force that draws people together. In such a process of coming together, more attention would be paid to belonging and to exhibiting solidarity will, as demonstrated when we treated the characteristics of African system of work-operation, particularly, the Igbos. This helps a group to organize itself and its resources for a collective action. Agreement must be reached about tasks and roles and shared responsibilities. Existing communication must be effective. Then lines of administration and accountability would need to be spelled out; patterns of initiatives and influences would have to be collectively determined where necessary, being guided by the leaders of the Church and in good faith. Where these structures are lacking, the efforts of the ecclesia family will lack focus and force, thereby ending up displaying nothing but ineffective good intentions or unguided opinions that will lead to no progress but mere fragmentalization and rancour as what characterized the old model ecclesia. But where the spirit of understanding through collaboration and mutual dialogue exists, God's presence is felt, as His work continues in the mind of the faithful through His grace especially when it has to do with His mission on earth. Through the help of the revelatory grace, the people of

God's family should open up to one another while the spirit of God is allowed to prevail. As the faithful (clergy and laity) come "to recognize one another as fellow recipients of the same grace, they gather to form the Church as family, with Christ as the head. The Church exists in some fashion wherever the divine mystery of redemption and reconciliation is at work"⁴⁴.

Work can be impersonal or mechanical, but God's work is always that of loving service. The clergy, in view of evangelization, have to think of the way Jesus noticed people's needs, his kindly, practical compassion, and his style of mission to all, as service. For instance, he showed his concern on social, moral, psychological and emotional groups of people and types of diseases. In his own life, he offered a comprehensive redemption from the world's sickness and, in his own person, he offered a relief for the sick, the sinful and the sad, the aliens, the outcasts, the poor and the ritually unclean. In his message, there was no guilt, which was impervious to the liberating and restorative power of God's love encountered in his own life and person. Hence, he emphasized the essence of faith, love, reconciliation and collaboration with his apostles. Many a time, Jesus told a sufferer, whom he had healed: "your faith has saved you". By faith here, he meant the fundamental aspects of the personal relationship, which a believer should have with God and with his fellow human beings. Aylward Shorter calls it falling in love with God and man. "It is an entry into God's way of thinking, loving and relating which of course, is in alignment with His will"⁴⁵.

Jesus really showed his concern, joy, support of his friendship and care to all those that came to him. A leader should always think and reflect on his relationship with those he/she is leading, how people have served him – where the smile has sometimes spoken more strongly than many words⁴⁶. The clergy and laity, by the virtue of their functions, share in the power by which Christ transforms and serves the world. Through their

44 A. Dulles, Models of the Church - a critical Assignment of the Church in all its aspects, Ireland: Gill & Macmillan Ltd., 1988, p.180.

45 A. Shorter, Jesus, And The Witch- doctor-an approach to healing and wholeness, New York: Mary Knoll Press 1985, p. 13.

46 Cf. E. Flood, The Laity, Today and Tomorrow, New York: Paulist Press, 1987.

unalloyed services in the Christian communities, the faithful will come to experience God's gracious kindness, His active operation in the world and in their lives.

It is the responsibility of our leaders, clergy or laity, to find ways of opening up for the faith fulfilment in the light of the cultural spirit of communalism, following the mind of Christ as presented in the New Testament and the Vatican II teachings; along which they can know and work with the master, Christ (through community of the faithful), thereby appreciating their gifts through building up of the kingdom of God on earth. This is assured through the encouragement of talents and gifts that exist in dioceses and parishes for the service of the family ecclesial community.

Family is created by God as the primary and most crucial communal unity. As we saw in the African family system, especially as it applies to the Igbos, family is extended and a communal guarding source that provides a context of covenant love, individual and collective growth and warmth development of personal identity. It is we-centred and multi-facet oriented that provides a maturing and strengthening matrix for solidarity practise of communalism among the members. In view of our observation and the entire presentation in this dissertation, our proposed new ecclesial communities in Igboland will endeavour to experiment on the following synthesized prospective proposals as complement of the previously mentioned structures.

* In our pastoral engagements we perceive the fact that the lay people trust and confine on the clergy a lot as they work under them in the mission. Their self-discloser makes them vulnerable and dependent on the clergy while the latter's power or authority over the laity progressively increases with time. It is important for the clergy to conduct themselves by maintaining a healthy atmospheric communalism, marked with the highest respect for personal dignity of others. This means that they must be sensitive of the power that they have and the way they apply it over the mission workers and even their fellow priests.

* We, the clergy should endeavour to use our pastoral authorities in such ways that we respect the gifts of others working under and with us by empowering them to maintain their

own freedom with their tasks as they freely participate more fully in the communal activities of the ecclesial family. This involves attention to human relationship that sees, venerates and respects Christ in the persons one interacts with.

* Priests and Bishops should develop the spirit of trust towards the faithful they work with and should take a good care of the mission workers who are also God's people. What it means is that they should strive to hold the fellow members of God's family accountable and trustworthy to more than professional standards. They should as well be altruistic and self-effacing by being approachable as well as available to attend the needs of others and when due.

* As pastors, we should be sensitive of the feelings of our people we are shepherding. Thus, during parish council meetings, we should try to avoid turning the general discussions to our personal interests and needs at the expense of what others feel. Our decision should be the synthesis of the general discussion, irrespective of our individual feelings. This means that we should be focused on the primary commitment of the parish.

* Priests and Bishops need to be wary of institutional self-centredness manifested by such terms as "my parish" or "my diocese". This mentality as we saw in the analysis can scare the laity from taking parish responsibilities and fulfilling their faithful call to collaboration in the ecclesial family of God. Thus, institutional structures in the Church must support the bonds of communalism that are essential for the promotion of human love and faith-commitment.

* In the new ecclesial family of God, there is need to give administrative authorities to the lay people according to their capacities and the person or group plays his/her role according to the charismatic gift of each. The better we learn to work together, the *meilleur* the Gospel can be preached within a culture that operates on the spirit of communalism as against the spirit of individualism. When ministry is shared all the members will be actively involved in the realization of God's kingdom on earth. Suffice it to say that the face of

Christ is resplendently present when all the members participate in the ministry in respect of their divergent charismatic vocations.

* In the new ecclesia there should be need for constant periodical on-going personal study and supervision through refining one's skills and knowledge. Such endeavour is highly recommended to the agents of evangelization, which could also be arranged communally like periodical retreats, conferences, seminars, etc. Our religious leaders have the responsibility to support and to promote those programmes and opportunities which will help to strengthen personal and interpersonal Christian growth and maturity among the clergy and laity and to oppose the current trends of superiority, marginalization and the sense of individualism in decision making.

* In this process, a positive and docile attitude must be generally adopted by the pastors in respect to the charisms of the laity and in the spirit of our Lord's teachings: "he who is not against you is for you" (Lk. 9:50). If it is possible, each diocesan Council should constitute a small commission for pastoral attention to the existential matters that arise (collective or individual problems).

* Agents of inculturation should be aware of their visions of the Church, Gospel, theology and tradition so that they can share this with others, letting it be modified and developed in the cultural interchange. As some have the skill for listening, others for leadership, and the more aware they are of their own abilities and lacks, the better they can carry out the process of inculturation through communal efforts.

* Recognition from pastoral leaders naturally "reinforces feelings of worth" and at times this may take the nature of rewards (salary increase or bonus). This is important because when the mission workers do not know how well they are doing because, perhaps, the pastors neither commend nor re-evaluate their pastoral activities, they (the workers) occasionally lose interest, hence, feedback is necessary for spirit motivation. Pastoral leaders have to encourage the workers more as they have the potential by providing opportunities for growth and commitment on mission things. The summary of it all is that

all collaborators gain and improve their pastoral knowledge in a diocese that is healthy for internalization of the acquired knowledge.

* It is necessary that all the agents of evangelization should be committed to common duty. It is important to note that people who are committed to their common duty in their collaborative efforts are less likely to discredit, diminish, stereotype, or wrongly perceive the activities of others, which they know that it will turn to be a boomerang on their part, following the Igbo spirit of communalism. Thus, they have to strive to receive and give information, encourage and complement one another and as much as possible, team up to resolve problems from which ever quarters they come from within the system. Under such a mutual understanding, one can stand for the other in any condition, as “mutual trust” is their main key of collaboration within God’s ecclesial family. This is to say that collaborators attempt to keep each synchronized with the same high level of understanding and love. Each monitors the development understandings of others, and attempts to correct any misconceived or misunderstood communication in a good spirit of healthy relationship. In such a fertilized good relationship, people are not talking at each other but with each other and in mutual understanding as they see themselves as members of God’s family.

* There is need to maintain a healthy means of constant communication relationship among the agents of evangelization within the new ecclesia. Communication here is seen as “a mutual exchange of information by any effective means”⁴⁷. Through communication, members share facts, feelings, ideas, and attitudes. These goals are to convey information, to assure understanding, to get action going, through encouraging motivation on the members. Breakdowns in communications are marks of inefficiency, frustration and mismanagement resulting perhaps from distorting information or wrong attitude toward the reality among the agents of evangelization.

* Knowing that true leadership does not count on the holding of position or office, which is assumed, but the concentration on the pursuit of purpose which entires the endeavour to win the hearts and minds of those one works with, like the pastor and his parishioners.

47. *Ibid*, p. 140.

Thus, our pastoral leaders should endeavour to maintain the spirit of open-mindedness. The effectiveness of our pastoral leaders depends much more on their personal spiritual devotions through prayers, use of common knowledge and the application of their professional competence. As our pastoral leaders rarely work alone since the large part of their job involves collaborations with the laity, the extent of their success depends largely on the quality of interpersonal relationships that exists within the parish. The extent of collaboration depends on the quality of interaction between the leaders and the parish workers. The positive result depends on the pastor's awareness of his potentialities and those of others as well. This is to say that their self-perception and how they perceive others as equally God's people constitute the main factor.

* Realistic perceptions are key elements in pastors' ability to communicate and get on with other members of God's family. The extent our religious leaders have accurate self-perceptions and try to behave in a way congruent with their self perception, the better they can collaborate with other members. This is simply seen in the fact that psychologically, "a close relationship exists between self-awareness, self-acceptance and acceptance of others". By implication this means that "the more religious leaders accept and value themselves, the more accurately they can perceive themselves, and the more effectively they will accept others"⁴⁸. This is where transferred aggression is well explained in relationship.

* Good spirit of animation is, therefore, expected from our pastoral leaders. When the leaders are happy all those around them are happy and when they are sad, every other person around them whether in the office or at home must surely have a share of their sadness, but these should be the ideal. Hence, it is better to have the type of leaders whose self-images are high and progressive; those who understand that life is sweet and worth living. It is important to maintain a relationship whether it is between formators and the formed or superiors and subordinates, or groups of religious organizations within a parish and their pastor, etc. Whatever type it is, there should be a spirit of understanding, collaboration, cooperation and freedom of speech and activities that have to flow among the members. These situations will result to a happy mood, maximum cooperation in

48. *Ibid.*, pp. 178-179.

activities as well as individual, groups and organizational growths in the ecclesial family of God.

* Freedom of work should be a watch-dog for the agents of evangelization in the family ecclesia. An aspect of our problem is that people are given work assignments and are not given the freedom to execute them without unnecessary interventions. The spirit here is that effective collaboration depends on the nature and freedom of the delegated work assignment. Pastoral activities should be “inherently distributed” in such a way that the individual collaborators have their independence to discharge their duties without being distracted.

* The people of the ecclesial family of God should have the ability to recognize the influence of the variable *heterogeneity* within the community. Our pastoral communities are made up of several variables which include: the age and levels of participants, the size of the group, the difference between group members of societies and organizations of different kinds, etc. This has to do with “objective or the subjective” individual differences. In other words, how do collaborators co-operate with each other to maintain harmony? Could there be frictions within the group? These differences could be caused by the followings: chronological age gap, period of ordination, differentiation of intelligence, influential social or spiritual development, family up-bringing and hereditary, nature of task specification, etc. Under such conditions, there should exist some sense of “optimal heterogeneity” among the members. This means that some differences of viewpoints are meant to insinuate a kind of good relationships or interactions given rise to healthy dialogue discussions as an ecclesial family of God. But this has to be done within the boundaries of mutual interest, love and intelligibility.

* In our diocesan pastoral activities in the ecclesial family of God in Igboland, there is the need to develop a healthy climatic condition. For effective collaboration, there should always be a co-ordination of activities for effective result. The success of pastoral members is measured on the needs of the parish in conjunction with the maintenance of the pastoral workers. The pastoral workers are considered here because they work within the

diocese/parish as they bring their needs for belonging, achievement, recognition, self-worth, identity, integrity, as well as other areas such as financial security and protection. To achieve efficiency, the pastoral co-coordinator has to articulate these needs through interactions between all involved. Hence, for effective improvement of collaboration, every focus should be on: (a) increasing the efficiency of the parish task activities – better meeting the task needs; and (b) maximizing the possibility for human growth within the pastoral activities, such as better ways to meet the worker's needs. These will be made possible through the existing quality of collaborative relationship within the pastoral communities as it has to be supportive and encouraged by the clergy.

* The agents of evangelization working in our family ecclesia should have opportunities to develop the spirit of problem-solving technique as an aspect of encouragement that helps for a progress in any pastoral activity. Since conflict occasionally tends to tear people apart from their communal efforts, the development of problem solving technique, however, will result in the satisfactory fulfilment of the needs of the community if well applied. In terms of competency, problem solving and decision making are both important for leadership activities, as they represent vital contributions toward the achievement of the pastoral goals and objectives. The solution will be easier if everybody is positively concerned to search for it together.

* As agents of evangelization, our clergy and laity should understand that the message entrusted to them challenges them to live up to the commitments that they had made in becoming God's people in virtue of their baptism. It also gives them the invincible hope and encouragement in the midst of doubts, misguided information, and conflicts to settle disputes amicably, knowing that God is the overseer. Their watch-dog should be the tenderness and love of God who oversees all pastoral projects within His earthly and divine kingdom. Hence, He is seen as the third party in their pastoral activities and His presence needs to be felt at every moment such as in dialogue for decision making and when resolving conflicts, etc. The preface for kingship of God on earth makes us understand that we are as shepherds in His vineyard, in His kingdom, which is "a kingdom of truth and life,

a kingdom of holiness and grace, a kingdom of justice, love, and peace” for all His ecclesial family members.

In our new ecclesia, to favour the participation of the laity in the Church for the future, there is need to conscientize the clergy and the laity alike on the importance of co-responsibility and the need to respect personality and to acknowledge the professional ingenuity of each member of the Church. To be co-responsible means to be accountable, to be answerable together with someone else. In other words, together with the bishop of the diocese, the priests and the laity are accountable before God for the success of the mission of the Church in the new ecclesia. This involves a self-commitment on the part of all and sundry. For the lay people, they “must give themselves and their possessions with a completely new sense of obligation and charity. Instead of contributing to the parish because of a sense of generosity, or because they like the priest, they must give their talents, their time and money because they themselves are also responsible for the salvation of souls in the parish”⁴⁹.

While we blame the clergy for the spirit of clericalism as exhibited by some, we should not also forget that, today, many lay men and women want to be priests or take up priestly functions without even passing through the junior seminaries. “Some lay men want to do nothing, to share no responsibility, to accept no burdens; others want to be boss, to shunt the pastor and even the bishop aside, and take over the whole show. They are valuable, articulate and confident. Very little in the Church escapes their criticism. They are willing to take over the administration of the parish and relegate the pastor to the role of a sort of clerical office boy”⁵⁰. This set of people would like to dictate to the priest on how to run a parish and what to do at any moment, otherwise, there would be no peace. These are few and are regarded as a negligible group in our context.

However, virtue lies in the middle. We should try as much as possible to avoid the extremes. The participation of the laity in the parish should not be with the notion of

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 110.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 110.

usurping a power, thereby reducing everybody to mere robot while he/she becomes a dictator, no! Rather, such a participant should try to avoid the above two extremes and take up a middle course. There must be chains and balances in the way we implement our functions in the Church as being guided by our ecclesiastical leaders in the spirit of love and understanding. Vatican II, among other things, presented what specifically characterized the lives of the lay people as their pastoral activities through total dedication to their faith-commitment while working along with the clergy. Particularly, pastoral richness of the role of the lay faithful in the Church has already been amply treated in the Apostolic Exhortation, *Christifideles laici* as previously presented. This calls for active participation of the members of God's family, the laity as well as the clergy to build the Church as a community of God's family on earth. "This is witnessed among other ways, in the new manner of active collaboration among the priests, religious and the lay faithful. It is realized by active participation in the liturgy, in the proclamation of the Word of God and catechesis and in the multiplicity of services and tasks entrusted to them"⁵¹. Through the mystery of the Church, all the people of God are called to participate in the Mystical Body of Christ through their charisms in evangelical activities.

The lay members, by their very vocation, seeks the kingdom of God like the clergy, by engaging more in active pastoral affairs and by ordering them according to the plans of God in virtue of their vocation⁵². Pope John Paul II did recognize the important roles of the laity as he remarked: "It must be noted with great satisfaction that in many particular Churches the collaboration of the non-ordained faithful in the pastoral ministry of the clergy has developed in a very positive fashion"⁵³. For him and for every Christian, "it has borne an abundance of good fruit while, at the same time being mindful of the boundaries established by the nature of the sacraments and of the diversity of charisms and ecclesiastical functions"⁵⁴. In our context, it is then important to reflect on the collaborative communion for effective work of the agents of evangelization, the laity and clergy

51 John Paul II, *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, Christifideles laici* (30 December 1988), n. 2: AAS 81 (1989), p. 396.

52 Constitution on the Church, L. G., Nos. 31, 37 and Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity. No. 23, 24.

53 Cf. John Paul II, *Discourse at the Symposium on "The Participation of the Lay Faithful in the Priestly Ministry"*, n. 2, *L'Osservatore Romano*, English Edition, 11 May 1994, page n.a.

54 *Ibid.*

respectively. We have to call to mind again that in view of our spirit of communalism, Church-as-family of God should involve the expression of unity in diversity: recognition and use of talents, respect of personality, application of different roles, respect for ministerial functions, and of the proper application of cultural values for the propagation of the Gospel message. These involve live and let live, and knowing one's position and keeping it.

Before our concluding statement, I will love to re-echo the thoughtful words of Dulles where he says that "the role of the Church in this cosmic theology of revelation is not simply to proclaim the bible message to the world but rather to enter into dialogue with all men of good will, to discern the signs of the times, and to interpret the many voices of our age, judging them in the light of the divine word"⁵⁵. This dissertation has emphasized on the need for collaboration among the agents of evangelization. A task that is realizable through effective and sincere dialogue and inculturation, to enable people worship in their cultural language and values as God's faithful family.

Like every other research, it is clearly impossible to handle our problem of collaboration comprehensibly and exhaustively as to address every possible variation which might present itself, more especially when the approach is interdisciplinary oriented, embracing history, theology, education and anthropology. But if the work as presented here has succeeded in creating the awareness of the teething challenges to effective evangelization in Igboland in particular and Africa in general, while focusing more intently on an aspect of the problem of collaboration among the actors, then, it must have achieved its objective.

⁵⁵ A. Dulles, *Op. cit.*, p.187.

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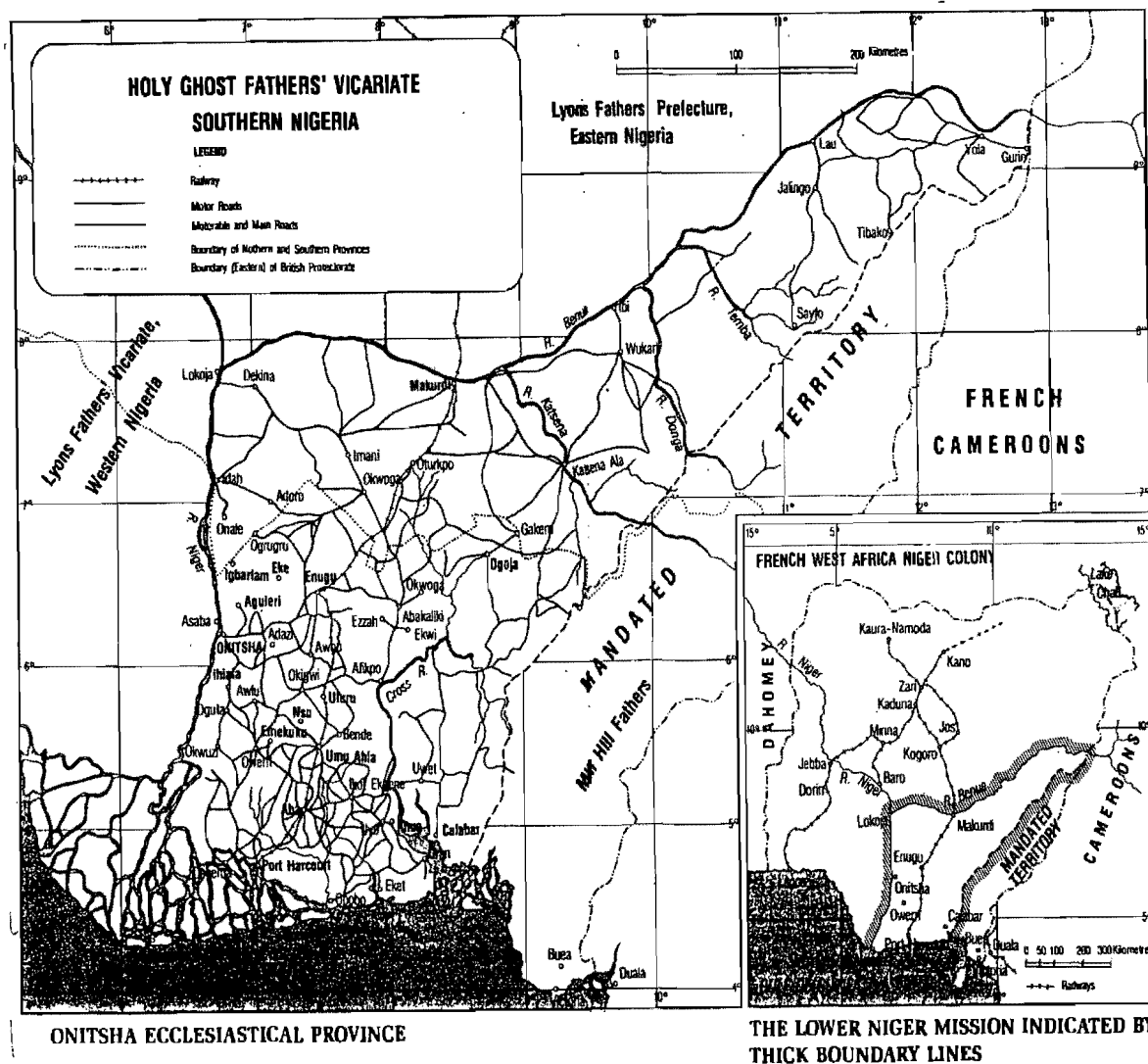
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APPENDIX 1. MAP OF IGBOLAND, SOUTHERN NIGERIA AND ITS GEOGRAPHICAL BOUNDARIES

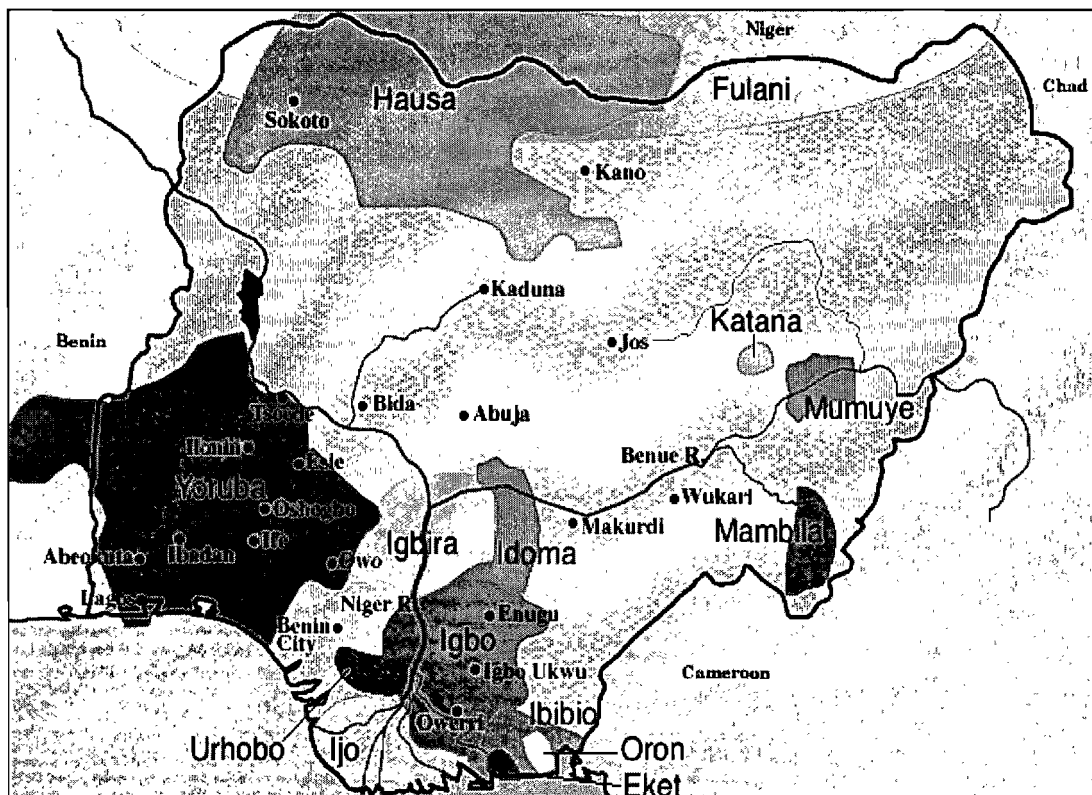


We have three major ethnic groups in Nigeria: the Yoruba of the west, the Hausa-Fulani of the North and the Igbo of the south-east. The Igbos inhabit a geographical area on the southern part of Nigeria and a small strip of land on the Western bank of the river Niger. The territory is traced within the equatorial rain-forest region, between latitudes 5° and 7° north and longitudes 60° and 80° east. They live in multitudinous villages, fragmented into small family groups of "ununna". They have a comprehensive language of their own, the same customs, traditions, religious belief, socio-political and economic system.

Today, Igbo population is about 20 million and is divided up to two thousand separate units but culturally united. They are marked by solidarity-will, meaning that they act as one voice despite their diversity of minor cultural differences. The Igbo people are regarded as one of the most distinctive and dynamic Nigerian-African tribes.

Among the Igbos, traditional beliefs are so knitted to the tribal structure that the religious and tribal organisations are identical. Our approach in handling the Igbo system of collaboration is not only an anthropological that has to do with the existential practice of the people, but is also a phenomenological exposition which highlights the life of communalism in relation to higher beings. This is because Igbo traditional religion is basically the way of life that knit all other aspects together. As it involves God, Spirits, ancestors, traditional priests and the living, the model is more of interrelationship, understanding, respect, and affinity of love and concern that prevailed within the life forces. The nature of their administration and mutual interaction with the forces around them, the nature of their family system, etc., all help to give credence to the understanding of their spirit of communalism. In this nature of life, attention is focused on the mutual service of the members towards a common goal on the subordination of the particular good or charisma of individuals or any group to that of the community in collaboration. What is manifested is a community of people who are individually free to organize and to carry out their functions with a purpose of community development. In Igbo world-view, justice does not focus exclusively on relating to individuals, as person to person, but existentially more with community of persons in relation with the entire cosmic realities. This involves a whole pattern of relationship with all that is, including man and man, man and nature (the cosmos), as well a man and the invisible realities. For Professor Bernabas Okoro, Igbo unique feature is not a singularity affair, but a “being with”. In Igboland, co-existence” or “belongingness” serves as a moral standard of judgment”.

APPENDIX 2.	MAP OF NIGERIA
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. Geographical location: -Nigeria is bounded by Niger Republic on the North, by Chad and Cameroon on the East, by the Gulf of Guinea on the South, and by Benin on the West. It is one of the most populated black countries of Africa and with about 125 millions inhabitants in an area of about 923,768-sq. km. (356,669 sq. miles).

Abuja is the new Federal capital, while the former, Lagos, is the largest city.

Independence: Nigeria was brought under British regime by the year 1906 and became Independent State on October 1,1960. It has three major ethnic groups:

- the Yoruba of the Southwest, the Igbo of the Southeast, the Housa-Fulani of the North.

Government: Nigeria is a republican federation of 36 States under a democratic regime. However, the central reality of Nigeria's political life since her independence in 1960, has been the unhealthy rivalry and suspicion between the Muslim group in the North and the Christian group in the South. Thank God, this religious problem is gradually calming down.

Economy: Nigeria is naturally blessed with agricultural products, notably palm oil, cocoa, rubber and peanuts. Petroleum supplanted her cash crops as the major source of foreign exchange.

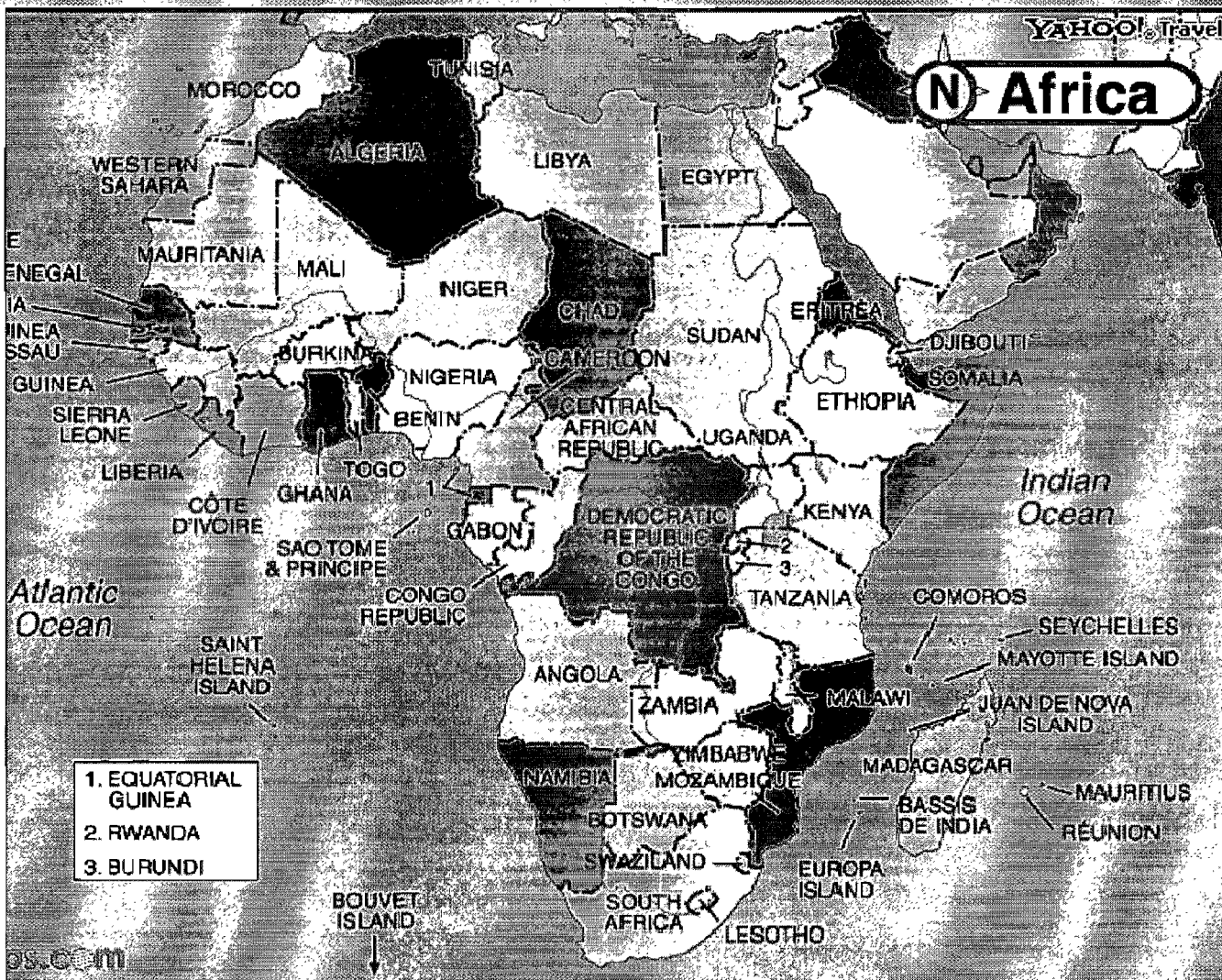
Language: English is the official language in Nigeria. Other indigenous languages popularly recognized are: -Hausa in the North, Igbo in the East, and Yoruba in the West.

Religion: There are 3 outstanding great religions strongly established in Nigeria:

- In the North, Islam is the majority - 40%,
- In the East and the middle belt region, Christianity is the majority - 40% and
- Traditional religion, practised all over the country - 20%

APPENDIX 3.

MAP OF AFRICA



APPENDIX 4. GENERAL GUIDING QUESTIONNAIRE

Culture, early missionary evangelization, clergy and laity collaboration

Instruction:

As a clergy/laity, could you please help us in the discussion of the following questions? Feel free to write and submit something where you determine to do so. Any written material has to be addressed to Fr. Clement Onwunata

General information (facultative)

- A. Name.....
- B. Area of specialization.....
- C. Function/ Status in the diocese/parish.....

Questionnaire

4.1 On Igbo culture

- A. How do we account for the origin of the Igbos?
- B. What are the things that characterize the lives of the Igbos?
- C. What is the cultural governing structure of the Igbos?
- D. How do you explain the spirit of communalism in African/or Igbo cultural system?

4.2 Early missionary evangelization

- A. What were the factors that contributed to the successful planting of the Gospel message by the early missionaries in the Igboland?
- B. Following the practice of Christianity in Igboland, do you think that there exists a problem of faith-commitment within the Catholic Church and why? Please, give reasons for your answer?

C. Following the nature of today's mission, what would you think are the main problems of the early missionary style of evangelization? Can you give some reasons for this style of evangelization, including the advantages and the disadvantages?

D. Could you please suggest some possible ways of resolving the mentioned problem(s) that are pointed out in number "C"?

4.3. Clergy-laity collaboration

A. For the laity: In your Church pastoral activities, do you experience any sense of poor collaboration among the people of God (clergy and laity) who work together in your parish/diocese? What do you think are the main causes of the clergy-laity poor collaboration in Igbo land?

B. How do you see the relationship between the Bishops/priests and the lay people within your diocese or parish? How does this relationship affect the spirit of collaboration within different working organs of the diocese/parish?

C. What do you think would be responsible for the poor collaboration in the pastoral activities between the clergy and the laity, respectively, in your parish?

D. For the clergy: Why is it difficult for two or more priests to live and work together in a parish presbytery in Igboland. Has this any exception? Why do you think so?

E. What do you think that the Catholic Church in Igboland has to do in order to ensure an effective collaboration between the clergy and the laity among the clergy themselves? Give reasons why you think so?

APPENDIX 5. COMPLEMENTARY QUESTIONNAIRES FOR THE SAMPLED SEMINARIES

Instruction

Please, help us to answer the following questions that patterns to you, honestly and frankly. You are free to write your name or not – (facultative). It is encouraged that you indicate your seminary (for the seminarians).

Part 1: Student's questionnaire

1.1 Section A. Student's behaviour variable

Aim: To determine teacher instructional strategy as perceived by the students

1. DO THE LECTURERS USE CLASS DISCUSSIONS (*especially those that involve complex and possibly controversial issues within the context of topics already covered in class*)?

Never	Sometimes	Undecided	Quite often	Always
-2	-1	0	+1	+2

Objectives: To promote the in-depth process of studies of the topic

2. DO THE LECTURERS ENCOURAGE GROUP ACADEMIC WORK IN HIS TEACHING (*especially those that are too large or difficult for a single student to accomplish independently*)?

Never	Sometimes	Undecided	Quite often	Always
-2	-1	0	+1	+2

Objectives: To develop the sense of academic co-operative work.

3. DO THE LECTURERS ENCOURAGE IN-CLASS SUCH ACTIVITIES LIKE ASSIGNING PRACTICE CONCEPTS AND SKILLS TAUGHT, WHICH THEY HAVE TO MONITOR IN THE PROCESS?

Never	Sometimes	Undecided	Quite often	Always
-2	-1	0	+1	+2

Objectives: To teach students to practice using new information and skills.

4. DO THE LECTURERS GIVE CHALLENGING BUT MANAGEABLE HOMEWORK OFTEN

Never	Sometimes	Undecided	Quite often	Always
-2	-1	0	+1	+2

Objectives: To introduce students to new existing materials or to give them additional practical lectures/practice with familiar information and procedures.

5. DO THE LECTURERS GIVE ASSIGNMENTS OR PROJECT TASKS THAT INVOLVE SOLVING SPECIFIC SOCIETAL/CULTURAL PROBLEMS?

Never	Sometimes	Undecided	Quite often	Always
-2	-1	0	+1	+2

Objectives: To have students apply classroom material to real societal/cultural situations

6. DO YOUR FORMATORS ENCOURAGE THE SPIRIT OF COLLABORATION WITH THE STAFF AND THE STUDENTS IN THE SEMINARY ORGANIC ACTIVITIES?

Never	Sometimes	Undecided	Quite often	Always
-2	-1	0	+1	+2

Objective: To determine the extent collaboration that exists between the formators/staff and the students.

1.2 Section B. Lecturers' behaviour variable

Aim: To evaluate the lecturers' behaviour as perceived by students

7. DO THE LECTURERS KEEP GOOD CONTROL OF THEIR CLASS WITHOUT BEING HARSH TO THE SEMINARIANS?

Never	Sometimes	Undecided	Quite often	Always
-2	-1	0	+1	+2

Objectives: To evaluate the ability of the lecturers to maintain good discipline.

8. DO THE LECTURERS EXHIBIT THE SENSE OF BEING PATIENT, FRIENDLY, CONSIDERATE AND HELPFUL TO THE SEMINARIANS?

Never	Sometimes	Undecided	Quite often	Always
-2	-1	0	+1	+2

Objectives: To evaluate the lecturers' rate of sympathetic understanding towards the students.

9. DO THE LECTURERS SHOW ENTHUSIASM AND SENSE OF HUMOUR IN THEIR ATTITUDES TOWARD THE SEMINARIANS?

Never	Sometimes	Undecided	Quite often	Always
-2	-1	0	+1	+2

Objectives: To test the human feeling of the lecturers toward the seminarians.

10. DO THE FORMATORS MAINTAIN HEALTHY AND GOOD RELATIONSHIP WITH SEMINARIANS, (ESPECIALLY, THOSE THE FORMATORS ARE DIRECTLY IN-CHARGE OF – (LIKE HOSTEL LECTURERS/PRIESTS))?

Never	Sometimes	Undecided	Quite often	Always
-2	-1	0	+1	+2

Objectives: To evaluate the extent of cordial relationship that exists between the formators and the formed.

N/B: The rest of the questions are open types that require making some statements.

11. Are the students' ideas and opinions worth something in the administrative decisions-taking that affect lives and vocations of the seminarians?

Never	Sometimes	Undecided	Quite often	Always
-2	-1	0	+1	+2

Objectives: To evaluate to what extent students opinions are being respected.

12. Please, can you name one or two things that you specially appreciate in the formative life-styles of the Professors generally, (you can also specify)?

13. Could you please give one or two suggestions for the improvement of the quality of lecturers and the encouragement of collaboration in your seminary, especially between the formators and the seminarians?

14. Could you please mention one or two things you specially admire in your seminary formation?

15. Could you please give one or two suggestions for the improvement of the seminary life-style, particularly on the teaching method, taught courses, life outlook and relationship generally?

PART II: Seminary lecturers' questionnaire

As a seminary lecturer, could you please use your wealth of experiences in helping to discuss the following questions? Please, feel free to write and submit something where you like doing so. This has to be addressed to Fr. Clement Onwunata

General information (facultative)

- A. Name.....
- B. Area of specialization.....
- C. Function/ Status in the seminary.....
- D. Name of the seminary.....

Questionnaire on inculturation

- A. Is inculturation taught in your Seminary and at what stage?
- B. How do you see the relevance of inculturation in the formative lives of the future priests?
- C. Following the performances of the priests trained out of your seminary, would you rightly say that the objectives of seminary formation in relation to the cultural needs of the people are being achieved? Why do you feel so?
- D. Do you think that these systems of formation as under-mentioned do exist in your seminary?
 - 1. Authoritarian method
 - 2. Permissive method and
 - 3. Authoritative method

Which one of them do you feel at home with and why? What do you think are the merits and demerits of the rest?

- E. How collaborative are the seminary staffs and the seminarians in your house of formation? Why do you think so?

F. Can you suggest further possible approaches that can help for the formation of the future priests in view of the religious, cultural and developmental progress of the Igbos?

APPENDIX 6. STATISTICS OF THE CATHOLIC POPULATION OF THE DIOCESES IN IGBOLAND OF SOUTHERN NIGERIA

#	Catholics	Population	Percent Catholic	Diocese	Year	Source
1	1,373,660	2,060,490	66.67%	Onitsha (Archdiocese)	2004	Ap.2005
2	840,000	1,400,000	60.00%	Enugu	2005	Ap.2005
3	823,483	2,001,838	41.14%	Okigwe	2004	Ap.2005
4	732,503	857,974	85.38%	Nsukka	2004	Ap.2005
5	670,986	1,693,329	39.63%	Owerri (Archdiocese)	2004	Ap.2005
6	658,009	1,247,637	52.74%	Awka	2004	Ap.2005
8	572,147	2,236,135	25.59%	Aba	2004	Ap.2005
9	199,000	884,209	22.51	Umuahia	4004	Ap.2005
10	562,837	881,385	63.86%	Orlu	2004	Ap.2005
14	458,302	687,453	66.67%	Nnewi	2004	Ap.2005
15	401,506	510,623	78.63%	Ahiara	2004	Ap.2005
16	360,000	600,000	60.00%	Awgu	2005	Bul.08Jul2005

Note: The table above is generated with the most recent data available for each diocese.
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APPENDIX 7: SKETCHES OF UMUNNA COMMUNAL ECCLESIA

Figure 1

UMUNNA COMMUNAL COLLABORATION: CLERGY - LAITY

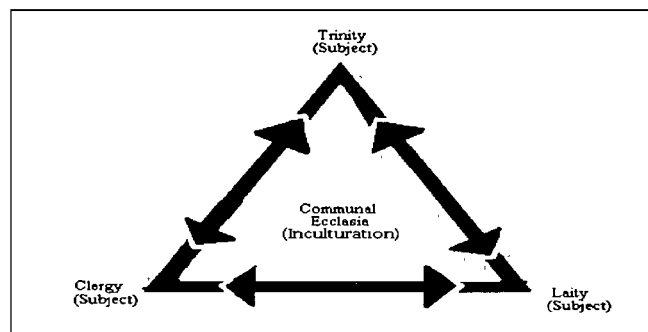
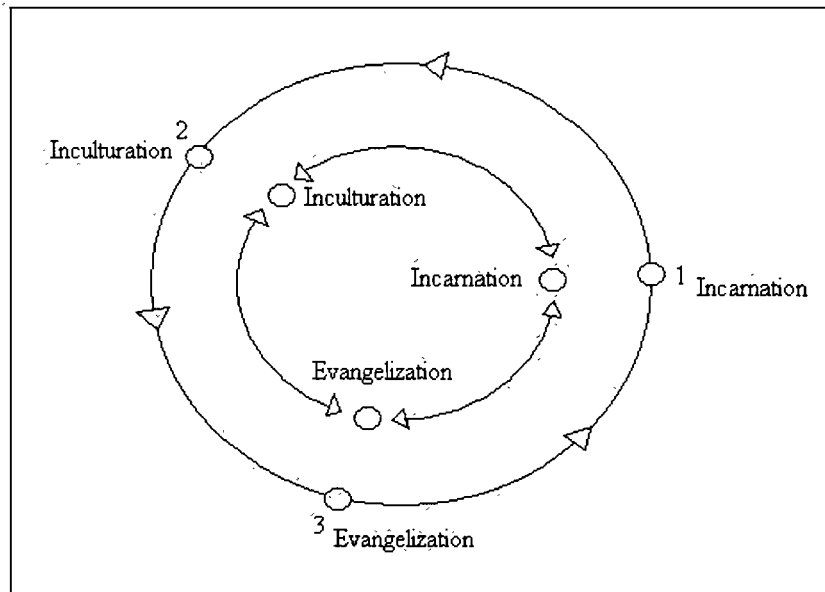


Figure 2

NEW PROPOSED SYSTEM OF UMUNNA ECCLESIA



Incarnation \longleftrightarrow Inculturation \longleftrightarrow Evangelization

Figure 3

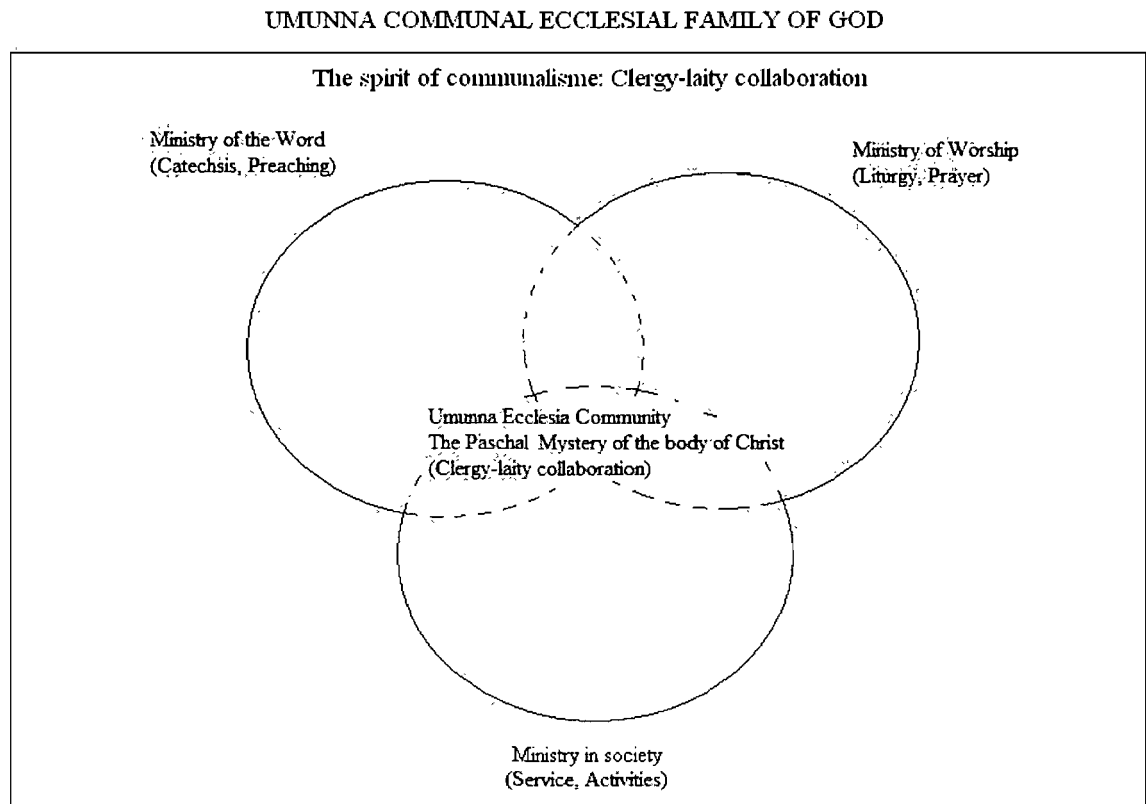


Figure 1 shows that the base for ecclesial of *umunna* community is the Trinity in the light of the people's culture; and the function of the agents of evangelization is realizable through participative ministry as service. Communalism shows collective and individual interests. Thus, community's existence is for the benefit of the individual members who participate for a common purpose. What is required here is a commitment, selfless dedication, mutual dialogue, encouragement through gift recognition and division of activities as members of God's family.

In figure 2, the terms, incarnation, inculturation and evangelization are interrelated by their nature. Incarnation, which is the "emergence of the divine in the human culture", results in inculturation and eventually leads to evangelization when carefully applied through the collaboration of the clergy and the laity in the pastoral ministry. Inculturation takes place when the Gospel message is incarnated (or has taken root) within the cultural life of the people. However, inculturation here is a gradual process that involves a dialogue of the Gospel and the good cultural values of the people.

In figure 3, the function is diversified, therefore, collaboration should be a critical instrument of leadership. Thus, "*Quod omnes tangit ab omnibus tractari et approbari debet*" (what concerns all must be discussed and approved by all" – A Roman Canonical Maxim). The spirit of communalism, (*igwe bu ike*) has to be realized in this structural ecclesia of *umunna* just like collaboration in the Igbo traditional relationship.